



PIPESTONE AREA SCHOOLS
HOME OF THE ARROWS

Pipestone Area Schools Strategic Design

Building the Conditions for a Learner-Centered System

Core Values

Learner Growth

We believe every learner can grow, achieve, and succeed when provided meaningful opportunities, personalized support, and high expectations.

Relationships & Belonging

We believe strong relationships and a sense of belonging are essential to learning, and that every person deserves to feel valued, respected, and supported.

Purpose & Readiness

We believe learning should be meaningful, relevant, and connected to life beyond graduation, preparing learners to thrive in college, career, and community pursuits.

Communication & Trust

We believe open communication, transparency, and accountability build trust and strengthen partnerships within our schools and across our community.

Community Partnership

We believe the success of every learner is strengthened when schools, families, businesses, and community members work together toward a shared purpose.

Mission Statement

The Pipestone Area School District cultivates curiosity to develop compassionate citizens and confident problem solvers who are prepared for future success.

Vision Statement

Empowering every learner to grow, contribute, and succeed in an ever-changing world.

Strategic Intent

Pipestone Area Schools is committed to creating the clarity, culture, and coherence necessary to be a learner-centered system that improves engagement, relevance, belonging, and readiness for life beyond graduation.

This strategic design focuses on establishing the preconditions for success by prioritizing:

- Clear and effective communication
- A positive, inclusive, and engaging culture
- Meaningful implementation of the Portrait of a Graduate

This work is aligned with Minnesota's Comprehensive Achievement and Civic Readiness expectations, ensuring that the district:

- Improves student achievement and growth
- Closes opportunity and achievement gaps
- Prepares all learners for college, career, and life
- Builds lifelong learners and engaged citizens

How Strategic Priorities Were Identified

Strategic priorities were identified by comparing feedback and data from multiple stakeholder groups and sources. Rather than relying on a single perspective, themes were validated when similar ideas consistently emerged across students, families, staff, school board members, community stakeholders, district data, and state requirements. This process ensured that the priorities selected for the strategic design reflect the areas of greatest need, opportunity, and impact.

Information was gathered through multiple sources, including:

- Individual and small-group interviews
- Focus groups with students, families, staff, school board members, and community stakeholders

- Review of district documents, plans, and existing initiatives
- Analysis of district performance data and organizational practices
- Review of Minnesota Comprehensive Achievement and Civic Readiness (CACR) requirements

Rather than relying on a single source of information, themes were identified through a process of correlation and triangulation. Feedback and data were compared across stakeholder groups to identify patterns that consistently emerged regardless of role, perspective, or affiliation with the district.

Questions guiding the analysis included:

- What themes appear consistently across stakeholder groups?
- Where do perceptions align or differ?
- What strengths should be preserved and expanded?
- What barriers are limiting student engagement, growth, and success?
- What conditions must exist for learners and staff to thrive?
- How do local priorities align with state requirements and future readiness expectations?

Through this process, several clear findings emerged. Students, families, staff, community members, and school board members consistently expressed a desire for:

- A system that is learner-centered, focused on personal growth, and future-ready
- Clear direction and consistent communication
- A culture that is inclusive, engaging, and builds pride
- Greater opportunities for student voice, choice, and ownership
- Meaningful connections between learning and life beyond graduation
- A simple, actionable, and measurable plan that builds shared ownership

The priorities contained within this Strategic Design represent the areas where stakeholder feedback, district needs, student aspirations, community expectations, and state requirements are most strongly aligned. As a result, the goals and actions identified in this plan are intended to address root causes, create coherence across the system, and establish the conditions necessary for long-term success.

This process will continue throughout implementation. Feedback, data, and stakeholder input will remain central to decision-making as the district monitors progress, evaluates impact, and adjusts its work over time through a continuous improvement cycle

This design reflects stakeholder feedback calling for:

- A system that is learner-centered, focused on personal growth, and future focused.
- Clear direction and consistent communication
- A culture that is inclusive, engaging, and builds pride
- A simple, actionable, and measurable plan that builds shared ownership

CACR Alignment Statement

Pipestone Area Schools aligns this strategic design to the Minnesota Comprehensive Achievement and Civic Readiness (CACR) requirements. The district will use this plan as its multi-year roadmap to improve student outcomes, close achievement gaps, and ensure all learners are prepared for college, career, and civic life.

CACR Goals and Alignment

CACR Goal 1: All children are ready for school

Alignment in Strategic Plan:

- Focus Area 2: Positive Culture
- Focus Area 3: Portrait of a Graduate (early awareness and learner development)

Metric	Baseline (Determine 2025 Data)	3-Year Target	5-Year Target
Students meeting early literacy benchmark by Grade 3	TBD	+7% increase	+12% increase
Attendance rate K-3	TBD	95%+	Sustain 95%+

CACR Goal 2: Achievement gaps are closed

Alignment in Strategic Plan:

- **Focus Area 1: Communication (equitable access and clarity)**
- **Focus Area 2: Positive Culture (belonging, engagement, consistency)**

Metric	Baseline	3-Year Target	5-Year Target
Reduce MCA reading proficiency gap between student groups	TBD	Reduce by 5%	Reduce by 10%
Reduce MCA math proficiency gap between student groups	TBD	Reduce by 5%	Reduce by 10%
Student belonging/engagement survey results	TBD	+10% positive responses	+15% positive responses

CACR Goal 3: All students are ready for career and college

Alignment in Strategic Plan:

- **Focus Area 3: Portrait of a Graduate**
- **Real-world learning (internships, job shadowing)**

Metric	Baseline	3-Year Target	5-Year Target
Students participating in career exploration/job shadowing	TBD	50% of students	75% of students
Students completing a Personalized Postsecondary Plan	TBD	100% Grades 9-12	Sustain 100%

CACR Goal 4: All students graduate from high school

Alignment in Strategic Plan:

- Focus Area 2: Culture (engagement + belonging)
- Focus Area 3: Portrait (relevance and purpose)

Metric	Baseline	3-Year Target	5-Year Target
Student attendance rates	TBD	95%+	Sustain 95%+
Credit completion/on-track indicators	TBD	90% on track	95% on track
Student engagement survey results	TBD	+10% positive responses	+15% positive responses

CACR Goal 5: All students are lifelong learners

Alignment in Strategic Plan:

- Focus Area 3: Portrait of a Graduate
- Student agency, voice, and ownership

Metric	Baseline	3-Year Target	5-Year Target
Students participating in goal setting/reflection activities	TBD	75% implementation	100% implementation
Student perception of relevance and belonging (student engagement survey)	TBD	+10% positive responses	+15% positive responses
Portrait of a Graduate implementation indicators	TBD	Implement in all schools	Embedded districtwide

Progress Monitoring and Reporting

Pipestone Area Schools will:

- Submit an annual CACR summary report to the Minnesota Department of Education
- Hold an annual public meeting to share progress and gather feedback
- Regularly survey students, families, and community members
- Use multiple data sources including:
 - State assessments
 - Local assessments
 - Graduation data
 - Postsecondary outcomes
 - Engagement and culture surveys

Governance and Advisory Committee

The Pipestone Area Schools Board will:

- Establish an advisory committee representative of the community
- Ensure stakeholder voice is included in planning and evaluation
- Review progress toward CACR goals annually
- Use data and recommendations to guide decision-making

Ensuring Student Success: Alignment to State CACR Goals

This table illustrates how Pipestone Area Schools' Strategic Design aligns to the Minnesota Comprehensive Achievement and Civic Readiness (CACR) goals. While the strategic design focuses on a small number of high-impact priorities, this alignment ensures the district is meeting state requirements while improving outcomes for all learners. The measures identified below will be used to monitor progress, guide decision-making, and inform annual reporting to the Minnesota Department of Education.

CACR Goal	Strategic Alignment	Key Measures
All children are ready for school	Positive Culture & Early Learning	Early literacy (students reading at grade level by Grade 3); Attendance in grades K–3 (students regularly attending school and engaged in learning)
Achievement gaps are closed	Positive Culture & Communication	Reading and math achievement gaps on Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA); Student belonging and engagement survey results
All students are ready for career and college	Portrait of a Graduate	Participation in career exploration and job shadowing experiences; Completion of a Personalized Postsecondary Plan
All students graduate from high school	Culture & Engagement	Student attendance rates; Credit completion and on-track indicators; Student engagement survey results
All students are lifelong learners	Portrait of a Graduate & Student Agency	Participation in goal-setting and reflection activities; Student perception of relevance, belonging, and engagement; Portrait of a Graduate implementation indicators

Design Principles

The strategic design will:

- Be simple, clear, and easy to understand
- Focus on a small number of high-impact priorities
- Be immediately actionable while remaining sustainable over time
- Establish shared responsibility across all stakeholders
- Include clear measures of success and ongoing progress monitoring
- Prioritize authentic engagement and continuous feedback loops

These priorities directly reflect stakeholder input and are intended to create clarity, alignment, and measurable progress across the system.

Guiding Reality

Stakeholder feedback revealed a clear pattern:

- Strong relationships and commitment to learners already exist
- Pride in programs, activities, and community support is evident however, the system lacks clarity, coherence, and consistency
- Too many initiatives and unclear communication create confusion and fatigue
- Engagement and student experience are inconsistent across classrooms and schools
- Students desire:
 - More voice, choice, and ownership (agency)
 - More relevant, real-world learning experiences
- Staff need:
 - Greater clarity, alignment, and support
 - Systems that reduce overload and increase impact

Focus Area 1: Communication

Goal

Establish a clear, consistent, and transparent communication system that builds trust, alignment, engagement, and shared ownership across the district.

Rationale

Communication is currently inconsistent, leading to confusion, missed information, and reduced engagement. A strong system must define not just that communication happens, but how it happens effectively.

Strategic Actions

- **Define a district-wide communication system that answers:**
 - **What is communicated**
 - **When it is communicated**
 - **How it is communicated**
 - **Who communicates**
 - **To whom it is communicated**
- **Establish consistent communication expectations across classrooms, schools, and district**
- **Build two-way communication systems that elevate stakeholder voice**
- **Ensure accessibility across multiple platforms (not one single channel)**
- **Establish systems to regularly evaluate communication effectiveness**

Key Deliverables

- **District Communication Framework**
 - **Clearly defines structures, roles, and expectations**
- **Communication Protocols**
 - **Consistent expectations across system levels**
- **Stakeholder Feedback System**
 - **Surveys, listening loops, and response structures**
- **Communication Dashboard**
 - **Public-facing updates and progress monitoring**
- **Annual Communication Effectiveness Review**

Success Indicators

- Stakeholders know where and how to access information
- Increased engagement across staff, students, and families
- Improved clarity on priorities and expectations
- Evidence that feedback is collected, analyzed, and acted upon

Check and Adjust

- Quarterly review of communication effectiveness
- Annual stakeholder feedback report
- Continuous refinement based on data and input

Focus Area 2: Positive Culture (Classroom, School, District)

Goal

Create a safe, inclusive, and engaging culture where all learners feel valued, supported, and connected.

Rationale

While strong relationships and positive programs exist, feedback indicates inconsistency in student experience, including concerns related to engagement, belonging, and cultural divides. A clearly defined and consistently implemented culture is essential to ensuring every learner feels safe and supported.

Strategic Actions

- Define a shared vision for culture across classrooms, schools, and district
- Establish a clear and actionable Code of Collaboration for all stakeholders
- Strengthen systems that support belonging, engagement, and relationships
- Strengthen the cultural liaison role to better support multilingual learners and families
- Address behavior and culture proactively while being thoughtful in language and approach

Key Deliverables

- District Code of Collaboration
 - Defines expectations for staff, learners, and community
 - Includes how it is taught, modeled, and monitored
- Classroom Culture Expectations
 - What every learner should experience daily
- Student Voice System
 - Regular, structured opportunities for feedback
- Cultural Liaison Strategy
 - Strengthened role and clear impact measures
- Aligned Behavior and Support System
 - Consistent expectations across all buildings

Success Indicators

- Increased student engagement (attendance, participation, feedback)
- Consistent learner experience across classrooms and schools
- Improved sense of belonging across student groups
- Reduction in behavior inconsistencies across the system

Check and Adjust

- Ongoing monitoring of engagement data (attendance, surveys, behavior trends)
- Quarterly culture review cycles
- Annual culture and engagement report

Focus Area 3: Portrait of a Graduate

Goal

Implement the Portrait of a Graduate as the central driver of learning, teaching, and decision-making across the district.

Phase 1: Build Awareness and Shared Understanding

Rationale

The Portrait of a Graduate is newly developed and has not yet been fully rolled out.

Stakeholder feedback reflects the need for awareness and clarity.

Strategic Actions

- Build awareness across all stakeholder groups
- Develop learner-friendly language at each level (K-12)
- Align rubrics and deliverables to each competency
- Communicate clearly and consistently across the system

Key Deliverables

- Learner-friendly Portrait of a Graduate (by level)
- Rubrics aligned to each competency (June rollout)
- District-wide awareness and communication plan

Phase 2: Deploy as the Way We Do Business

Rationale

Students are asking for more relevant and meaningful learning. The Portrait must move from awareness to daily practice.

Strategic Actions

- Integrate the Portrait into:
 - Instruction
 - Assessment
 - Classroom practices
 - School improvement plans
- Implement monthly focus areas (e.g., Collaborator, Communicator)
- Expand real-world learning opportunities:
 - Job shadowing
 - Internships
 - Community partnerships

Key Deliverables

- Monthly Portrait of a Graduate implementation plan
- Classroom integration examples and expectations
- Career and life readiness framework

Phase 3: Check and Adjust

Rationale

Sustained success requires continuous improvement through feedback and evidence.

Strategic Actions

- Establish regular review cycles
- Monitor leading and lagging indicators
- Use feedback to refine implementation

Key Deliverables

- Portrait of a Graduate progress monitoring system
- Quarterly review cycles
- Annual progress report

Success Indicators

- Staff can clearly articulate and apply the Portrait
- Learners demonstrate competencies in real contexts
- Increased student agency, voice, and ownership
- The Portrait is visible in classrooms and daily practice

Check and Adjust (Across All Focus Areas)

Continuous improvement is how the district will operate:

- Quarterly review cycles at district and building levels
- Annual public reporting aligned to MN requirements
- Stakeholder feedback integrated into decision-making
- Adjustments made based on evidence, not assumption

Implementation Approach

Year 1: Build the Preconditions

- Establish communication systems and expectations
- Define and align culture across the district
- In collaboration with learners, develop rubrics and deliverables for the Portrait of a Graduate

Years 2–3: Implement and Deepen

- Integrate the Portrait into classrooms and learning experiences
- Strengthen culture and belonging systems
- Expand real-world learning opportunities

Years 4–5: Sustain and Refine

- Monitor progress and adjust as needed
- Strengthen systems for long-term sustainability
- Scale successful practices across the district

Conclusion

Pipestone Area Schools has strong staff, a supportive community, and a clear desire to improve outcomes for learners.

This strategic design focuses on what matters most:

- Clear and consistent communication
- A positive and inclusive culture
- A shared vision that drives daily practice

By focusing on these priorities, Pipestone Area Schools will create the conditions necessary to successfully transition to a learner-centered system and ensure all students are prepared for their future