

# Lyles Presents District's 3-Year Strategic Plan

*Details forthcoming*

By Chris Neidenberg

In broadly discussing points to be included in the school district's upcoming three-year Strategic Plan, Superintendent of Schools **Dr. Marcia Lyles** says it will look to enhance its K-12 curriculum via encouraging a best practices approach that could expand effective programs, initially implemented by certain schools, district-wide.

At a recent board meeting, Lyles used a graphics presentation to highlight some plan objectives the district hopes to make reality between 2017-20, and will supersede the prior plan, covering years 2014-17. She assured very specific, detailed examples will be part of the final document.

"District liaisons met with different board members and we expect to hammer it out in October," Lyles reported during a late September board of education meeting.

To develop the state-required document the, the superintendent explained, it resulted from many hours of extensive input offered across the school community, from parents, teachers and administrators, and praised them for their dedication and hard work.

In praising the teachers, Lyles said, "There's been a great deal of professional development (PD) on curriculum content."



Her comments came during the same evening a board majority nixed several contractual arrangements to continue using outside companies for those services, as critics - the loudest being Board Members **Marilyn Roman** and **Gerald Lyons** - continued insisting much more of that work can be done in house.

Lyles, however, was just as persistent in maintaining the ability to use third parties in PD is essential while also claiming district-paid administrators and teachers have simultaneously engaged in substantial PD with each other.

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*"What we're going to do going forward ... is to see how we can improve many of the excellent programs we already have and how we can execute them appropriately," pledged Lyles, repeatedly praising district-wide staff for working in the field every day to improve conditions. "There are many things going on and we want to expand the opportunities to other schools."*

Goals the superintendent cited included

- Expansion of long-term "project-based learning" beyond the small group of schools now successfully engaged in the practice. The website [www.edglossary.org](http://www.edglossary.org) defines the initiative as "any programmatic or instructional approach that utilizes multifaceted projects as a central organizing strategy for educating students."  
The passage continues, "When engaged in project-based learning, students will typically be assigned a project or series of projects that require them to use diverse skills—such as researching, writing,

interviewing, collaborating, or public speaking—to produce various work products" in contrast to the shorter-term objective achieved through measuring sticks like tests and quizzes.

"We plan to have project-based learning in many other schools," said Lyles, adding that teachers will be instructed "to target lesson plans to the projects they have."

- Expansion of vocational education opportunities for students looking to fulfill careers with only their high school diplomas. Lyles cited as successful models courses on auto repair and maintenance and home construction now being taught at Dickinson High School.
- Expectations that about 200 high schoolers enrolled in a special program at Hudson County Community College will graduate receiving an accredited associate's degree as a kickoff to what the district hopes will blossom into a lasting relationship.
- Expansion of the "community school" model the district seems to be moving toward implementing at Whitney M. Young Jr. P.S. 15 off Stegman Street. The national Coalition for Community Schools defines them as both a place and a set of partnerships between the school and other community resources. Its integrated focus on academics, health and social services, youth and community development and community engagement leads to improved student learning, stronger families and healthier communities." The JCEA has partnered with the administration and school board on developing the school since the beginning of this year.
- On a related note, a pledge from the superintendent to "actively engage family and community in supporting schools and enhancing the academic achievements of all 39 schools." She described the objective as "a major priority for us."
- A promise to revise all district operations "to effectively meet the needs of staff, students and curriculum."
- Further enhancing programs emphasizing a STEM (Science, Technology Engineering and Math) curriculum for students seeking careers in those fields, currently exemplified by the district's partnership with Liberty Science Center.

Lyles assured the district's professionals will look to even better ways the JCPSD can "prepare all students for college and career," according to a passage contained in the state's Core Curriculum Content Standards.

She promised "all of our resources" will be poured into trying to achieve "this one goal."