



redefining excellence

DSBN 2023-2028 STRATEGIC PLAN



Strategic Plan

2023 - 2028

Learning and Growing Together



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DSBN's Land Acknowledgement is a formal statement made at the beginning of meetings, events and other occasions to publicly recognize Indigenous peoples and their unique relationship to ancestral lands and territories upon which DSBN and its schools are located. It serves as a reminder of treaties, agreements and our responsibilities to uphold them, care for the land and maintain peaceful relationships with one another.

To read the Indigenous Education and Voice strategic priority and values, please go to page 10.

To read our land acknowledgement go to: dsbn.org/aboutus

A Wholehearted Thank You

We cast the net as far and as wide as we could to invite you. We asked you – students, staff, families and community members – to share your thoughts with us and help shape the future of the DSBN. And share you did.

We heard your voices, opinions and feedback loud and clear. You spent valuable time to tell us what we did well and where we needed to improve. You shared your DSBN stories and the stories of your families, friends and neighbours. You shared what you genuinely believe is most important for the DSBN to do to best serve students and all stakeholders for the next five years.

Your engagement with our strategic planning process was unequivocally impressive; it is the largest contribution we've ever seen for a strategic plan. Over 29,000 people across our beautiful Niagara Region participated, collectively contributing 25,000 ideas about what the DSBN's future needs for it to be a place that helps students learn, grow, thrive and become their best selves.

Your ideas were inspired.

Your feedback was thoughtful.

Your voices were understood.

We listened and what we heard is that you are passionate about not just what students will become, but who they are today and who they want to be in the future. You want us to create learning environments where we all feel empowered to build meaningful, trusting relationships, that encourage students and educators to be co-creators of their learning.

You told us our strategic plan needed to acknowledge that our world has changed more in the last few years than it has in the decade before it. We heard that while you value being seen as individuals – your lived experiences, your knowledge, your culture and your history must be considered as important parts of who you are. Students expressed to us that it makes all the difference when schools create spaces for them to be honest versions of themselves and for everyone to celebrate and accept their uniqueness.

Your feedback was vital in helping us assess if the DSBN Vision and Mission still reflected who we are as a school board and still described where you wanted us to go in the future. It didn't take us long to see that our mission and our vision, "Achieving Success Together," no longer spoke to you, nor did it capture the needs of our current environment.

So, for the first time in 17 years, we are introducing our new Vision Statement. It intertwines your voices with our purpose, while expressing our inspiration and vision to guide us for the next five years.

Our vision of Learning and Growing Together inspires us to continue creating equitable educational experiences and opportunities where everyone's uniqueness is valued and celebrated.

You are a caring community who invested your time, talent, and energy to come together, share your voices and make this new strategic plan possible.

The 2023-2028 multi-year strategic plan is our new path. It is how we will achieve our vision forward. We are here because of you. We are truly looking forward to co-creating our future together.



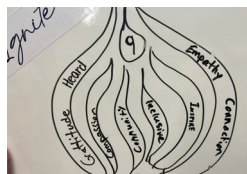
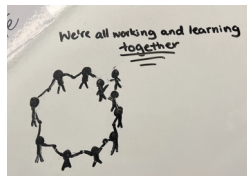
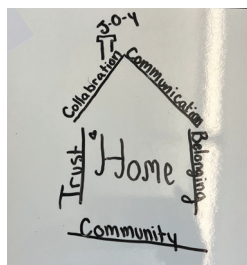
Warren Hoshizaki,
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND SECRETARY



Sue Barnett, Chair,
DSBN BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The plan behind the plan

Redefining Excellence will guide everything we do for the next five years, including the decisions we make, the programs we create and the goals we set out to achieve. Which is why the first step we took to develop our strategic plan began in March 2022 with a single goal – to find as many ways as we could to listen.



March ▼

Planning begins! Working and advisory groups formed

April ▼

Research, defining priorities and setting goals is done. Small group discussions underway to seek input on these initial plans

May ▼

Presentation road show for student, community, and stakeholder groups

June ▼

Timeline development for student, staff, families, and community input

July & August ▼

Creation, vetting and refinement of stakeholder questions for input

August ▼

Internal implementation workshop for schools

September ▼

The first in-person stakeholder feedback event takes place. The Ignite Survey launches and collects thoughts and feedback for 14 days

October ▼

The second in-person stakeholder feedback event takes place. Stakeholder feedback in-hand, the creation of the new strategic plan begins

November ▼

The strategic plan is passed by the Board of Trustees

Redefining Excellence

When you think of excellence, what comes to mind?

It's a big question. Although traditionally, there's a common view of what excellence looks like in our society. It's usually the exceptional performances, like getting the highest grades possible, being the lead scorer for the team, or being the absolute best at something above everybody else. All too commonly, achieving excellence seems to mean achieving a standard that has already been pre-defined for us.

But, we are all different. We are individual. We are unique. And since this is true, how can we all possibly fit into the same generalized definition of excellence?

At the DSBN, we believe there is always room for change. In fact, we embrace it. Because change is the foundation of what empowers us to learn, grow and move forward. To make real, impactful progress, we must be open to new perspectives. We must be open to redefining the way things are to embrace what is truly possible.

This process doesn't happen on its own. It begins with us. It starts when we challenge ourselves to see the familiar in an unfamiliar way. Redefining happens when we assess if what we did, what we thought and what we believed yesterday, still makes sense for today.

As we embark on a brand new path for our strategic plan – one that will inform everything we do for the next five years – this is the time to reevaluate our strategies. To revisit our values. To rethink our expectations and our definitions of success.

It's time to redefine excellence. To achieve our vision of "Learning and Growing Together," we are taking crucial steps forward, with the knowledge that we have the ability – as students, staff, families and community members – to redefine what excellence means to each of us.

For the system, redefining excellence means breaking down barriers. It means building new pathways. It means changing our approaches and amending our environments to best serve our DSBN family.

For students, maybe passing the test in your least-favoured subject is your version of excellence because you tried your best. Or it's solving a problem completely by yourself without getting help from your parents, a teacher or technology. Or it's about loving and accepting yourself exactly as the person you are, because of your values and no one else's.

For staff, redefining excellence could be a commitment to unlearning some of the perspectives of the past. It could mean modifying how you treat your one-on-one relationships or how you collaborate with your colleagues.

We are proud to introduce the theme of the 2023-2028 Strategic Plan as Redefining Excellence. This plan is founded in recognizing that change is progress. We are all unique, making our individual versions of excellence just as unique. With this strategic plan, excellence is not about being the best. It's about being your best.

Redefining Excellence gives us a clear identity, purpose and direction, and it will be our guide towards defining our values and strategic priorities.

Vision

Our Vision is the future we aspire to:

Learning and Growing Together

Mission

Our Mission describes the actions we will take to reach our ideal future of Learning and Growing Together:

Within a culture of care, inclusion and innovation, the District School Board of Niagara's purpose is to inspire lifelong learning and foster relationships through meaningful connections with individuals, communities and the environment.



Five Strategic Priorities

Our vision and mission are propelled by **FIVE STRATEGIC PRIORITIES**. Embedded within each strategic priority are strategic actions.

These new Strategic Priorities will guide the next five years at the DSBN. But they do so much more. Each priority provides the actions we will take to reach our vision and describe what we uphold as our values and core culture.

These five Strategic Priorities embody DSBN's philosophy at the heart of who we are, what we believe and how we will act.



Learning

Learning and Growth

STRATEGIC PRIORITY

We value the uniqueness of each individual and believe everyone can excel and achieve excellence at the DSBN.



Belonging

Equity, Inclusion and Human Rights

STRATEGIC PRIORITY

We respect and uphold the importance of equity, inclusion, dignity and human rights in all learning and working environments, so that individuals from all social realities and lived experiences are valued.



Thriving

Mental Health and Well-Being

STRATEGIC PRIORITY

We believe in cultivating learning and working communities where everyone feels safe and connected, while increasing mental health awareness knowledge and skills.



Walking Together

First Nation, Inuit and Métis Education and Voice

STRATEGIC PRIORITY

We value and respect the rights of First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities, families and individuals and we believe in honouring these voices.



Spaces

Learning Environments

STRATEGIC PRIORITY

We value caring and supportive environments that promote lifelong learning for all students, staff and community.



Learning

LEARNING AND GROWTH

STRATEGIC PRIORITY

We value the uniqueness of each individual and believe everyone can excel and achieve excellence at the DSBN.

DSBN is a place where students can learn and grow at their own pace, in their own way. It is a place where they will determine their own goals and define their own personal version of excellence. We are each truly unique, and DSBN students and staff are empowered to learn and grow in a way that best reflects them as individuals.

Our Strategic Actions for Learning and Growth are:

- Prioritizing and cultivating the relationships between educator and student by investing care and knowing each learner in the classroom community.
- Using innovative, engaging and culturally responsive programming to support students now and as they transition to their future pathways.
- Honouring student and staff voice as coauthors of their learning by valuing the importance of both collective and individual perspectives.





Belonging

EQUITY, INCLUSION AND HUMAN RIGHTS

STRATEGIC PRIORITY

We respect and uphold the importance of equity, inclusion, dignity and human rights in all learning and working environments so individuals from all social realities and lived experiences are valued.

DSBN is a place where students and staff feel safe to be themselves. It is a place where we honour and actively dismantle barriers that prevent the celebration of each individual's unique traits, cultures, talents and experiences. Our schools thrive on developing differentiated strategies to ensure each learner has what they need to flourish.



Our Strategic Actions for Equity, Inclusion and Human Rights are:

- ▶ Uphold human rights and build knowledge and awareness of the principles of anti-bias, anti-racism, anti-colonialism, anti-oppression and inclusion.
- ▶ Identify and eliminate systemic barriers, racism and discrimination to ensure equitable access to positive opportunities and outcomes for all.
- ▶ Provide differentiated strategies and programming to accommodate each learner in a way that promotes their inclusion and full participation in learning.
- ▶ Examine and change policies, procedures and practices through an equity, inclusion and human rights lens to eliminate differential treatment and outcomes for sovereignty seeking and equity deserving groups.



Thriving

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

STRATEGIC PRIORITY

We believe in cultivating learning and working communities where everyone feels safe and connected while increasing mental health awareness knowledge and skills.

DSBN is a place where individuals are encouraged to nurture their interpersonal, self-awareness and self-control skills to enhance their contributions, whether it be in the classroom, in the workplace, or interacting with others in the community. Together, we will seek to understand each persons' context and work together to provide individualized supports.

Our Strategic Actions for Mental Health and Well-Being are:

Strengthen the universal delivery of social emotional learning and mental health literacy to ensure students have a diversity of skills to be successful.

Deepen our understanding of the unique experiences and circumstances of individuals to support the needs of students and school communities.

Enhance access to intensive and integrated supports that further promote the partnership between school and community.





Walking Together

First Nation, Inuit and Métis Education and Voice

STRATEGIC PRIORITY

We value and respect the rights of First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities, families and individuals and believe in honouring these voices.

DSBN believes in taking action to demonstrate that the knowledge, experiences and perspectives of First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities are critical to learning and growth for everyone. We strongly believe that supporting First Nation, Inuit and Métis student voices and well-being includes investing in opportunities for these voices to be heard. We will commit to ongoing reconciliation by bringing the truths of history forward, enabling us to keep working towards creating positive, long-term change.

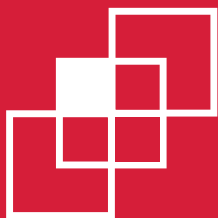
Our Strategic Actions for First Nation, Inuit and Métis Education and Voice are:

Invest in relationships with Indigenous organizations, Treaty Partners and families to strengthen community voice, build trust and offer reciprocity.

Promote strategies to work from an asset lens and drawing from the National Centre For Truth and Reconciliation's Calls to Action to strengthen the presence of First Nation, Inuit and Métis cultures, languages, histories and current realities to promote a deeper understanding for all.

Honouring First Nations, Inuit and Métis student voice to further support their well-being and school experiences to promote students' learning and growth.





Spaces

Learning Environments

STRATEGIC PRIORITY

We value caring and supportive environments that promote lifelong learning for all students, staff and community.

DSBN is a place where learning happens everywhere. Learning can happen inside the classroom, outside with nature, or in a virtual space. At the DSBN, learning is not limited to a classroom. Learning happens within a combination of the physical spaces we provide, as well as the supportive, caring and welcoming spaces we create. DSBN is a learning organization where students and staff feel comfortable to learn, empowered to excel and safe to be.



Our Strategic Actions for Learning Environments are:

- Establish learning spaces that are safe, welcoming and responsive to student needs.
- Foster environments that promote lifelong learning for all students, staff and community through a collective responsibility to nurture a culture of trust, respect and cooperation.
- Optimize our facilities and human resources to effectively and responsibly create environments that enhance learning.
- Recognize that we are all part of local and global communities and responsible for environmental stewardship.

Thank You

to everyone who was involved in building our strategic plan.

Our Redefining Excellence Strategic Plan came together from the hard work, dedication and contributions of the individuals on the Strategic Plan Working and Ad Hoc Strategic Plan Committees. Their efforts have been invaluable in bringing together the perspectives of our students, staff, families, community members and stakeholders.

Strategic Plan Committee:

Chair: Elizabeth Klassen
TRUSTEE FOR BEAMSVILLE AND GRIMSBY

Sue Barnett
TRUSTEE FOR WELLAND
AND CHAIR OF THE BOARD

Alex Bradnam
TRUSTEE FOR ST. CATHARINES AND
NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE AND VICE-CHAIR
OF THE BOARD

Kevin Maves
FORMER TRUSTEE FOR NIAGARA FALLS

Dave Schaubel
FORMER TRUSTEE FOR FORT ERIE
AND PORT COLBORNE

Strategic Plan Working Committee:

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SYSTEM ADMINISTRATOR
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Kelly Pisek
ELEMENTARY SUPERINTENDENT AND EQUITY,
INCLUSION AND ANTI-RACISM

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Darren VanHooydonk
ELEMENTARY SUPERINTENDENT
AND COMMITTEE CHAIR

Elisha von Wuthenau
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT
AND COMMITTEE SECRETARY



With this **strategic plan**,
excellence is not about
being **the best**. It's
about **being your best**.



Learning

LEARNING AND GROWTH



Belonging

EQUITY, INCLUSION AND HUMAN RIGHTS



Thriving

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



Walking Together

FIRST NATION, INUIT, AND MÉTIS EDUCATION AND VOICE



Spaces

LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS



**redefining
excellence**

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