

SECTION 1

Introduction: A Strategic Plan for the Yellow Springs School District

The Yellow Springs School District constitutes one of the community's most vital assets. The schools have contributed in many ways to the quality of life of the Village of Yellow Springs and the surrounding area. Indeed, our schools are consistently ranked "Excellent" or "Excellent with Distinction" by the State of Ohio Board of Education. In turn, our schools are fortunate to have this community's racial and economic diversity, its support of arts and sciences, and the global outlook and ethos of service of its citizens.

What does it mean to call ourselves the "Education Village"? How can we earn that nickname for the rest of the 21st century?

Our students are talented, motivated, and successful. Yet, the Yellow Springs Schools face a number of challenges. They include:

- Redesigning what and how we teach to better prepare our students for the world they will enter;
- Aligning our financial resources to match our educational ambitions;
- Recruiting, retaining, and developing the best faculty; and
- Making sure the schools continue to be an integral part of the community and continue to be worthy of support by community residents and businesses.

The people who live in the Yellow Springs School District are changing, as is the regional and global economy. The next section and Appendix 1 provide a summary of population and economic trends that affect the District in terms of enrollment and revenues for operating the schools. New demographic data from the 2010 U.S. Census will be released later this year that may cause the District to speed up or modify some of the Strategic Plan's objectives and initiatives.

Schools are also affected by the growth of information technologies and how they are used to access people and information. New technologies may change how students learn, what, where, and when they learn. Technologies may change how students relate to their teachers and other students. Teachers too may want to utilize new technologies to improve communication with and students and parents.

From challenges come opportunities to refashion our schools in profound ways. The Yellow Springs School Board and administration have approached the challenges and opportunities carefully and inclusively.

- First, we encouraged expansive thinking about the future of Yellow Springs Schools (hereafter referred to as YSS).
- Second, we created a Steering Committee composed of teachers, parents, community members, school administrators, and board members.
- Third, we engaged teachers, students, parents, and community members in creative, innovative, and courageous thinking about what should be expected from our schools and our students.

- Fourth, we sent a survey to every household in the Village of Yellow Springs and to the middle and high schools.
- And finally, we held a public forum to identify actions that could be taken to improve learning and our programs, staffing, and finances.



Section 2 and Appendix 1 present community and school trends and data. These trends and data tell us about the changes the District has experienced over the last decade or more.

Section 3 and Appendix 2 provide details about the Steering Committee, engagement of the community in the Strategic Planning process, and results from expansive thinking meetings, discussion groups, a survey, and public forum.

The Strategic Plan for the Yellow Springs School District should be seen as a living document that will change as our view of learning and educating changes and as our students and community change. It is a guide rather than a blueprint. It is based on our understanding of the present and vision of the future. And finally, the Strategic Plan for the Yellow Springs School District is meant to be a catalyst for all toward collaboration and a call to focus our resources on the District's mission to *...help all our students succeed in college, career, citizenship, and life.*

Section 4 identifies the Plan's priorities, goals, evaluation criteria, and suggested strategies. A revolution in educational thinking has been brewing both locally and beyond over the past decade. The revolution is economic, social, political, and

technological. These powerful forces are driving us to change and better serve student needs today and tomorrow. We believe that the six priorities listed in Section 4 will help us make that change.

Section 5 focuses on how the Plan will be implemented. Successful plans require translating goals and objectives into initiatives. School administrators, teachers, and students will further develop the plan by identifying tasks, responsibilities, and timelines.

Successful plans also require leadership at all levels; resources to support people and initiatives; constant communications internally to the school district and externally to the community and state that provide the bulk of the District's revenues; and a sense of almost universal responsibility for achieving the Plan's goals. Like all plans that are based on today's facts and knowledge, the 2020 Plan will be revised and adjusted using evaluation tools to provide continuous feedback.

Work begins in Fall 2011.

Yellow Springs Schools Guiding Principles–

Yellow Springs Schools believe in providing a rigorous and relevant educational experience for all students. When students graduate, they will be ready for college, career, citizenship, and life. We will prepare them with necessary knowledge and skills to be adaptive and flexible in their personal and professional lives and to be civic-minded leaders of the future.

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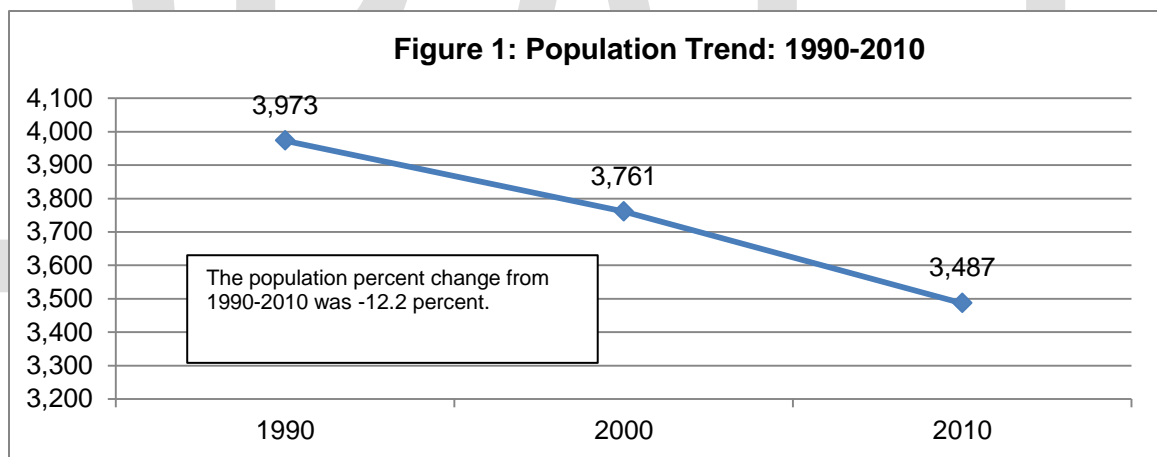
SECTION 2

Background Information: Yellow Springs School District

Yellow Springs School District (hereafter referred to as YSS or the District) student enrollment and operating revenues directly relate to demographic and economic changes taking place in the District. The Class of 2020 Initiative recognizes that students and the population of the District have changed over the last decade and will continue to change in the future. Continuing the District's current standing as a school of Excellence with Distinction depends upon planning for change in the future and utilizing knowledge of the past and present to help make decisions about what and how to change. The following is a brief snapshot of how the Village of Yellow Springs and the District have been changing over the last decade or more. (Please see Appendix 1 for more data and detail.)

Who We Are and How We Have Been Changing¹

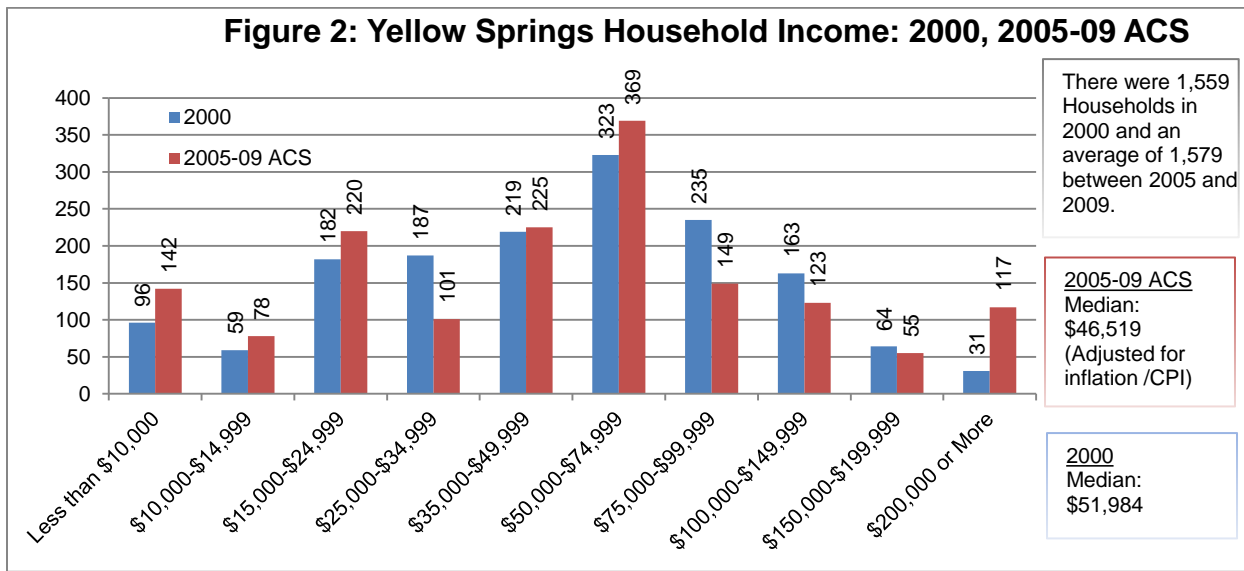
Yellow Springs is older and less wealthy than it was in 2000. From Figure 1 below, it can be seen that the population of the Village of Yellow Springs slowly and steadily fell by over 7 percent over the last decade. By age group, the population of individuals younger than 14 years old decreased by 26 percent while the population of individuals 65 years and older increased by almost 6 percent. There were also signs of new growth. The population of individuals from 20 to 24 years old and under 5 years old increased by 71 and 21 percent respectively.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990, 2000, 2010

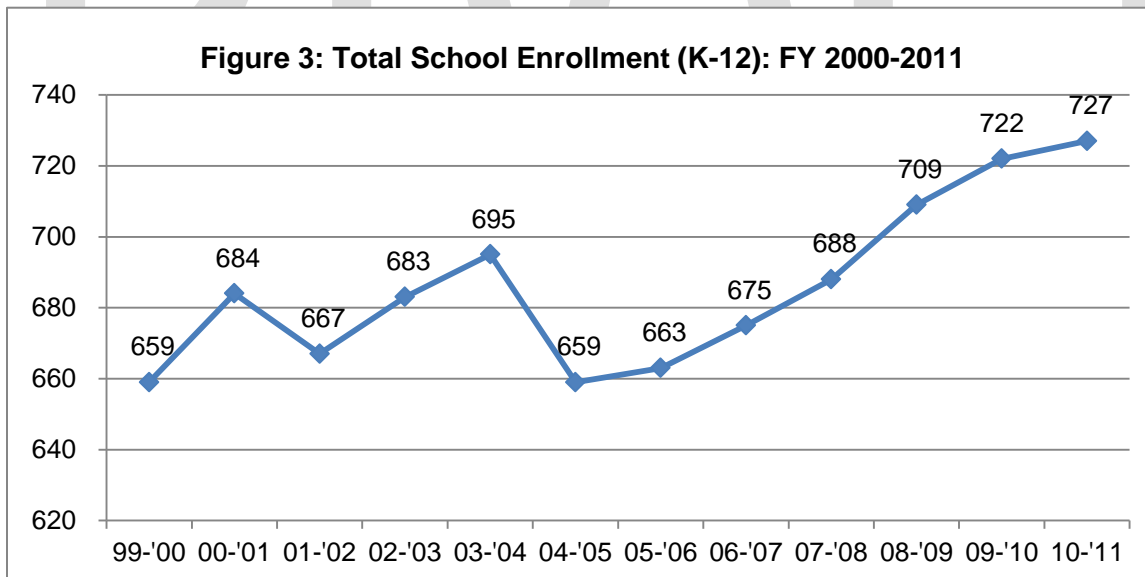
Today, there are 6 percent fewer families with children than there were in 2000 and the median income of those families fell by almost 10% over the decade (in constant dollars). Further, family incomes above \$75,000 decreased significantly with the exception of families earning more than \$200,000. In general, households with incomes below \$25,000 (families are included within the household category) increased significantly and households earning above \$75,000 decreased (except for those earning more than \$200,000). Please see Figure 2 below for household income change over the last decade.

¹ Data for 2010 is limited to the general population. U.S. Census Bureau estimated demographic data for the decade using the American Community Survey. Income data was averaged over the 2005-09 period. Additional 2010 Census data will be released later this year.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000, and American Community Survey, 2005-2009

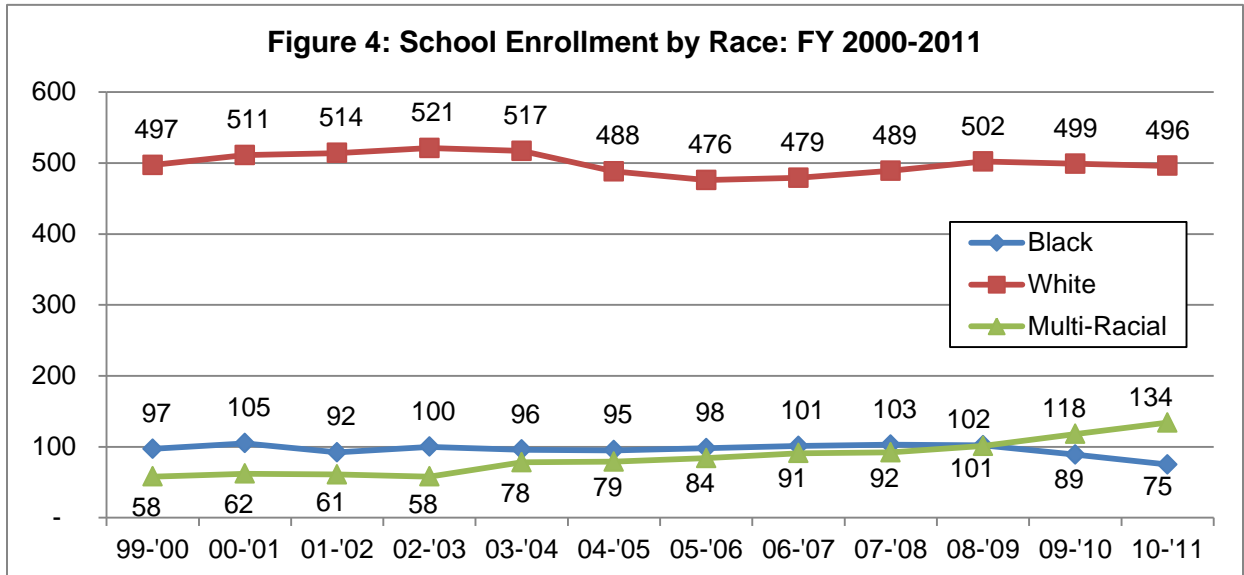
Even though the number of families and school-age children in Yellow Springs decreased over the years, school enrollment increased. This anomaly can be explained by open enrollment. For example, 148 of the District's 727 students in 2010-11 resided in other school districts (Figure 3). Further, the racial diversity of YSS schools (white versus black and multi-racial) too increased from 30 percent in 2001-02 to 42% in 2010-11. Please see Appendix 1 for detailed graphs of demographic changes.



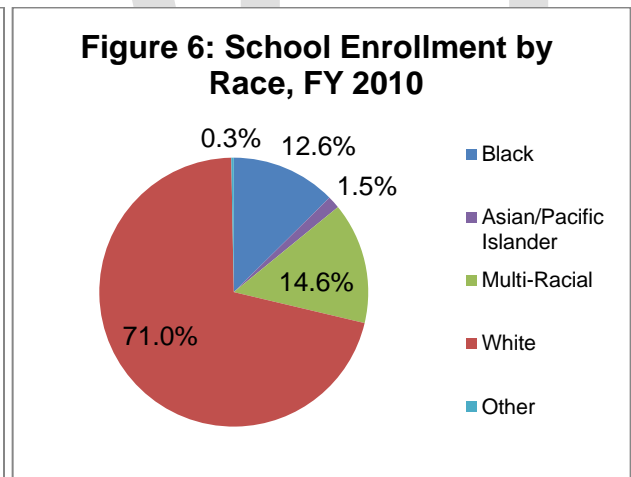
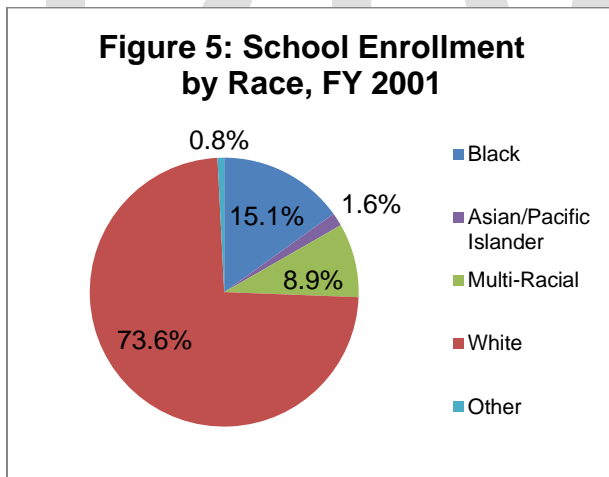
Source: Ohio Department of Education

Figure 4 provides data on YSS school enrollment by race from 2000 through 2011. Figures 5 and 6 show the percentage of each race that enrolled in 2000 and 2011. Black student enrollment decreased from 103 students in FY 2008 to 75 by FY 2011.

However, this decrease might be explained by a growing number of individuals who select two or more races beginning with the 2000 U.S. Census. For example, in FY 2001, blacks made up 15.1 percent of students in Yellow Springs schools but dropped to 12.6 percent by FY 2010, while the percentage of students that identified themselves as multi-racial increased from 8.9 percent in 2001 to 14.6 percent in 2010. Hispanic enrollment also has increased in recent years.

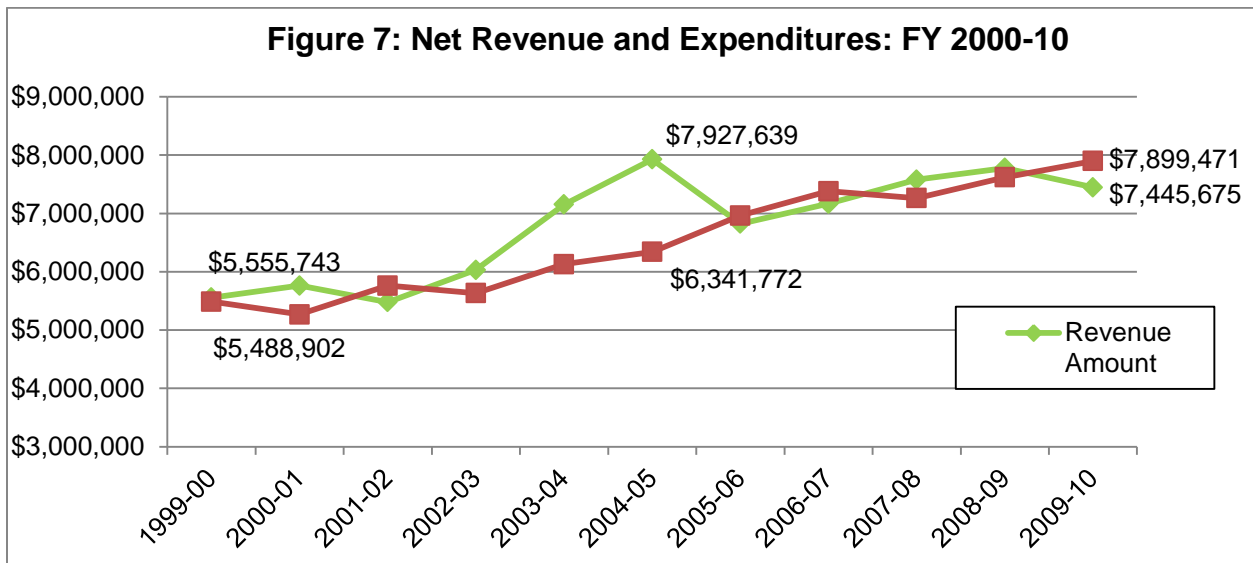


Source: Ohio Department Education *The ODE did not provide data specific to race for the '09-'10 school year (FY 2011).



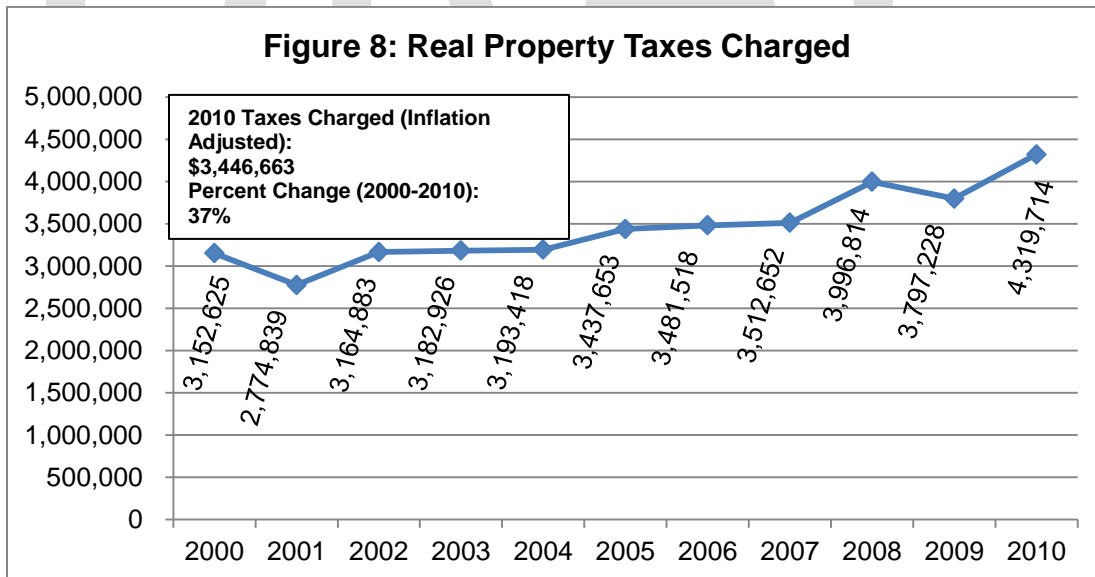
Source for Figures 5 and 6: Ohio Department Education (Annual Report Cards)

Financially, revenues coming to the District lagged behind the costs of school operations and instruction four out of the last eleven years. Figure 7 below provides a line chart comparing revenues and expenditures by school year.



Source: Ohio Department of Education

Property values affect property taxes that comprise the largest share of school revenues. Figure 8 below provides the trend in property taxes for the District. Adjusting taxes collected for inflation, property tax revenues increased by 37 percent in constant 2000 dollars.



Source: Ohio Department of Taxation

SECTION 3

The Process to Create the Plan

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Looking ahead ten years is not only forward thinking but also challenging. The process for developing the Class of 2020 Initiative Strategic Plan comprised seven steps or phases. A graphic of the seven phases is provided below. The first phase focused on thinking about education in new ways and accounting for technological, economic, and social trends. Phase 1 of the strategic planning process began in December 2010 by inviting KnowledgeWorks to meet with school personnel and the community to share their ideas and research on the educational needs of future generations and to listen to the views of school personnel and the community regarding the future of education in Yellow Springs. KnowledgeWorks presented their findings to the community in January through a report titled: "2020 Forecast: Creating the Future of Learning." A summary of the report is provided in Appendix 2.

Another strategy to engage the community in expansive thinking about the future of Yellow Springs School District (YSS) involved three films titled: *No Textbook Answer: Communities Confront the Achievement Gap* (February 26th); *Where Do I Stand?* (March 19th); and *Two Million Minutes* (March 26th). The film series was sponsored by the Morgan Fellows at Antioch College and were preceded by the video titled *Changing Education Paradigms*. The film screenings were also followed with discussions led by youth facilitators who had been trained to engage their community in a conversation about the future of Yellow Springs' schools.

The District also hosted a Guest Lecture Series beginning February 12th. Five guest speakers stimulated discussion around issues central to the Yellow Springs Schools such as testing, gaps in student achievement, and public versus private schooling. A brief synopsis is provided in Appendix 2.

Phases 2 through 5 were led by a Steering Committee composed of five constituencies. Wright State University's Center for Urban and Public Affairs (CUPA) was selected to conduct small group discussions with teachers, parents, school administrators and staff, and students; survey the community; organize and facilitate a public forum; and assist the Steering Committee with the development of a draft strategic plan. The Class of 2020 Steering Committee and their constituencies included:

Representing the Board of Education:

Sean Creighton and Benji Maruyama

Representing the Administration:

Mario Basora and Dawn Weller

Representing the Community:

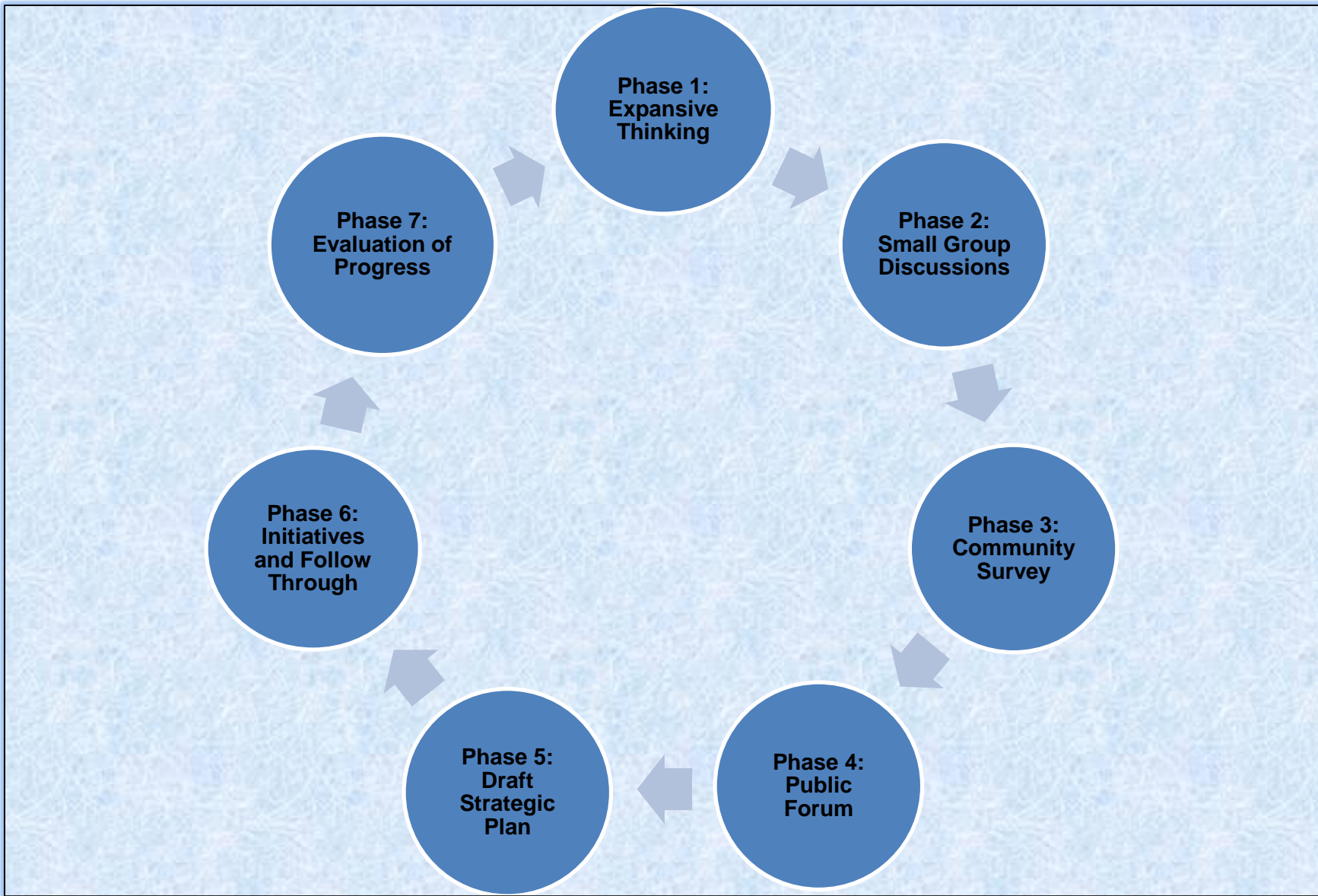
Mark Meister and Wally Sikes

Representing the Teachers:

Sarah Amin, Aurelia Blake, and Elizabeth Lutz

Representing the Parents:

Steven Conn, Lori Kuhn, and Sterling Wiggins



CUPA facilitated discussions with 19 parents (three separate meetings); 16 teachers (two meetings); 35 students (four meetings); 5 administration staff (one meeting); and three face-to-face interviews with Board of Education members. Facilitators gave more attention to the ideal classroom for learning when discussing the future of schools with students. Participants in general were asked:

*What is your vision of the ideal school? (For students it was ideal classroom)
e.g. classroom, learning materials, curriculum etc.*

What capacities should every student have when they leave YSS?

What support do you need as a Parent or Teacher or Administrator or Board Member?

As YSS move towards 2020, what values or commitments are most important?

The following summarizes what we heard from the groups.

Vision for change...

- learning develops from curiosity threading throughout the community;
- learning grows best in mixed age groups and through projects that integrate different fields of knowledge; apply learning to real life; focus on problem solving and critical thinking and engage with community;
- learning is best facilitated by independent, committed, motivated, trained, and accountable teachers;
- learning thrives in a culture that promotes innovation, risk-taking, and caring.

The classroom should be...

- smaller in size (20 students);
- open environments that are functional, flexible, and include mobile learning arrangements;
- connected to resources.

Learning techniques should...

- employ technology that is up-to-date;
- employ technology that gives teachers and students greater access to information;
- serve the needs of students.

The role of the teacher should be to...

- foster student curiosity, entrepreneurship, resilience, and self-direction;
- understand and adapt to different learning styles;
- engage parents/guardians and community in the learning process;
- serve as facilitator, mentor, catalyst, problem solver, and content expert;
- utilize resources and engage in furthering their own educational development to enhance the level of learning for every child.

The role of parent/guardian should be to...

- become a partner with the teacher or teachers, including providing feedback on how well their child is learning;
- share a commitment to learning with their student;
- engage in school activities including tutoring and volunteering;
- instill values that foster learning, e.g. manners, respect for others, responsibility.

The role of the student should be to...

- embrace learning and curiosity;
- value teachers and learning;
- accept diversity;
- take personal responsibility for their learning...be self-directed.

The impact of a Yellow Springs Schools education...students will be

- capable of thinking critically, debating, and problem solving;
- aware of resources to continue the learning process;
- self-directed and ever curious;
- willing to accept responsibility for their future;
- resilient in the face of failure;
- civically responsible;
- driven to further their education and/or empowered to fulfill their personal life goals;
- respectful of others.

To be successful we must...

- accept and respect the roles of parents, teachers, and administration;
- limit classes to a manageable size;
- open schools to the community and the world;
- require accountability across the board;
- increase educational standards;
- develop alternatives to grades and current learning assessment;
- foster leadership on many levels;
- create new funding sources.

The values and commitments needed to guide future change include...

- recognizing the importance of others and their diversity;
- social justice;
- responsibility for one's own learning and success;
- service to the community;
- the need for flexibility and adaptability;
- tenacity;
- the application of knowledge;
- appreciation for cross disciplinary education;
- the fundamental connections between individual, community, and world;

- the importance of forming partnerships to expand possibilities and capacity.

Survey of the Yellow Springs School District

Data from the discussion were used to construct question response categories that comprised a survey of the District's teachers, parents, students, administrators, Board members, and community. Teachers, administrators, and staff received an email asking them to complete the survey. Middle and High School students took a paper and pencil survey via a class. Parents and community members received a letter with an access code for completing the survey online.

The data below focuses on three questions that provided the information most important to developing the strategic plan. The questions asked included what "Yellow Springs Schools need to be more committed to..." This question provided insight into what standards, beliefs, or values should guide future initiatives in the district. The second question inquired about what changes the schools should pursue in the future. The last question asked about essential outcomes that should guide the development of the strategic plan.

CUPA surveyed five populations: community, parents, teachers, staff, and students. The term population means we did not sample the group; instead, we attempted to contact all individuals within each group. The table below shows how many from each group were surveyed and how many returned questionnaires.

Surveys	Community	Parents	Teachers	Staff/Admin	Students	Total
Population ¹	1573 ²	503	49	40	UNK	
Returned	144	74	22	8	218	446 ³

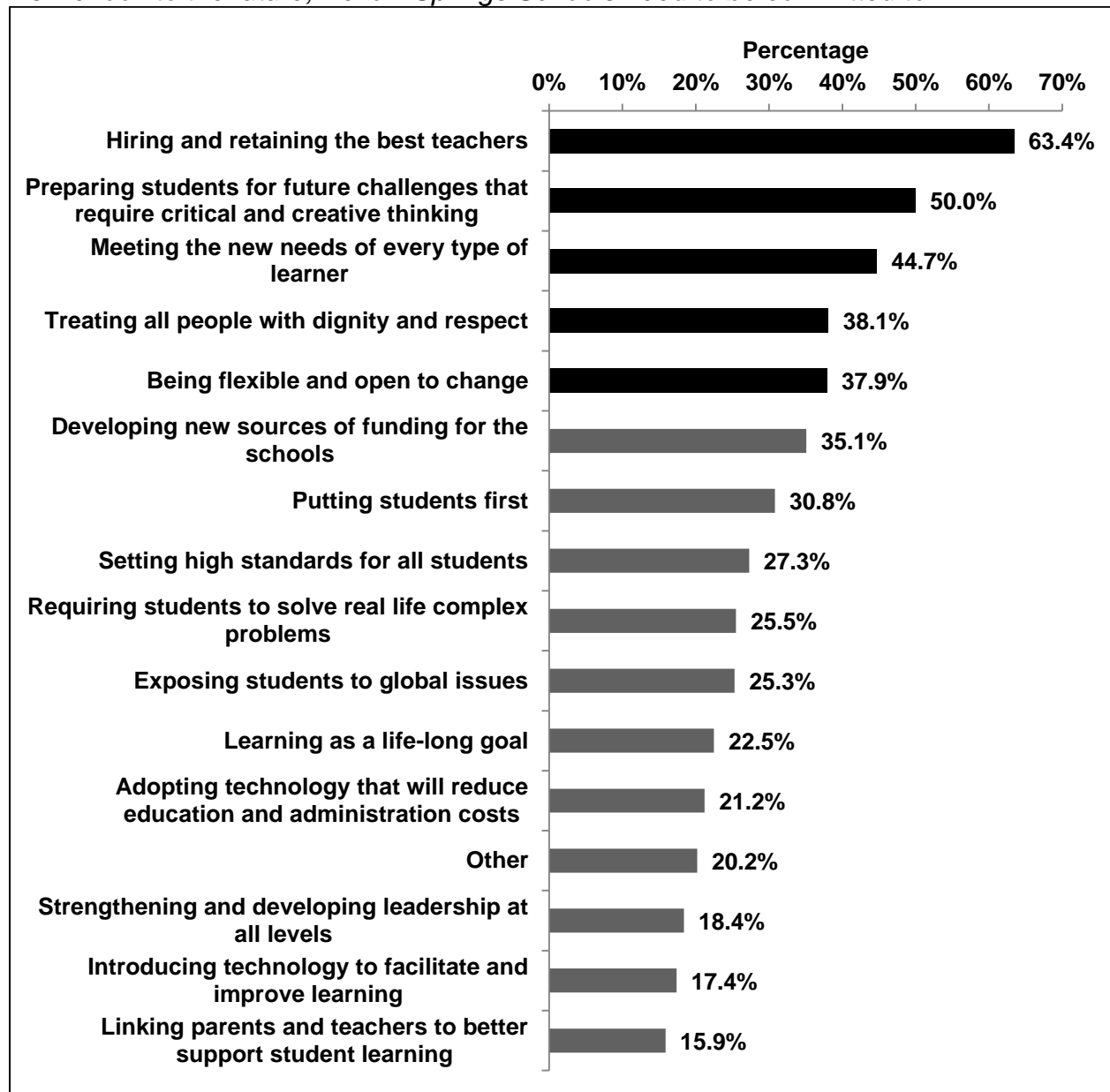
¹ Population is defined as all members of the group that could be identified using available databases. Surveying the population maximized the opportunity for individuals to participate in at least one part of the YSS strategic planning process.

² This number represents community addresses contacted excluding 77 businesses that were also sent surveys. We did not include business data in the results below.

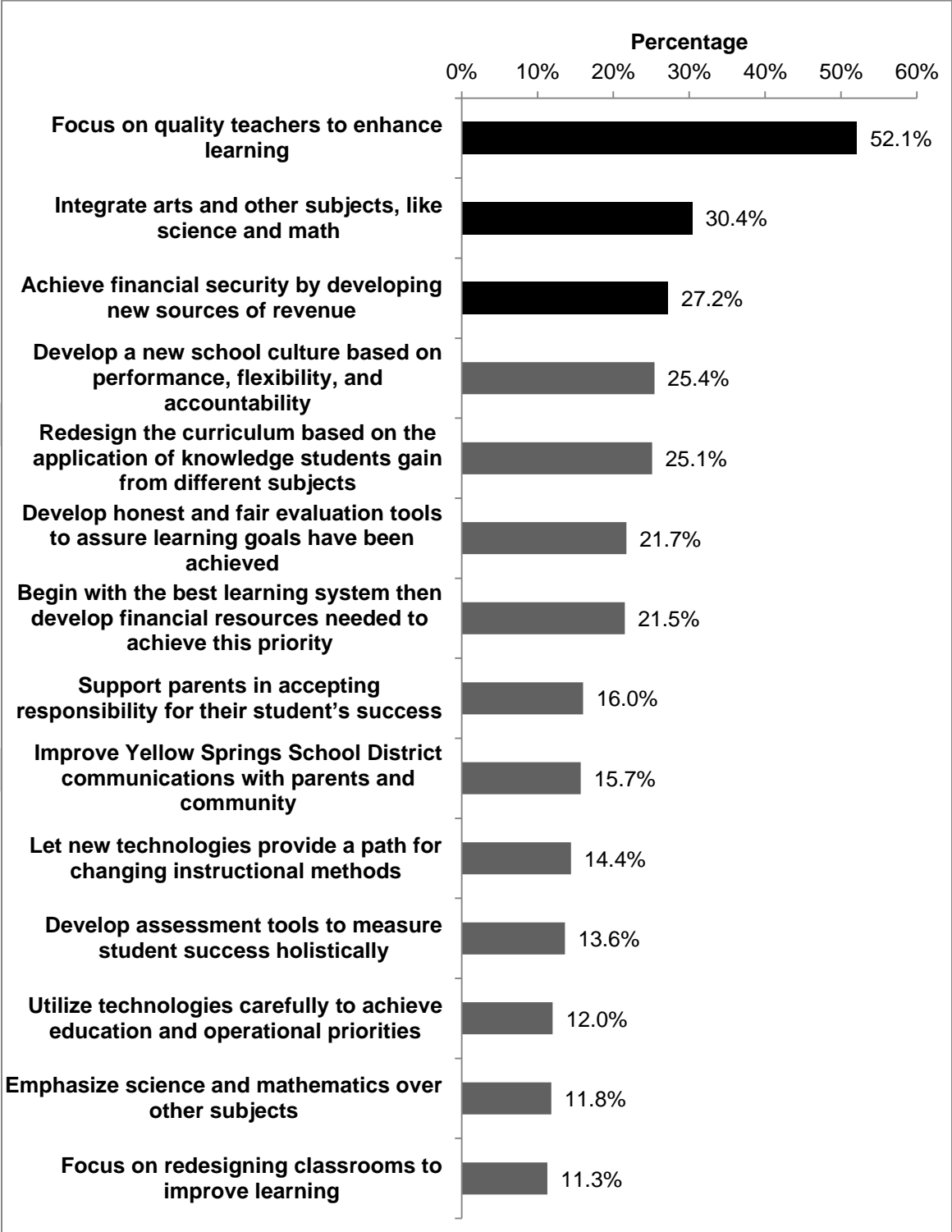
³ Returned questionnaires totaled 446. Twenty individuals checked more than one category; for example, a respondent might have checked parent and community member. Therefore, the sum of the returns in population rows equal 466 rather than 446.

The three charts below present data combining all population groups.

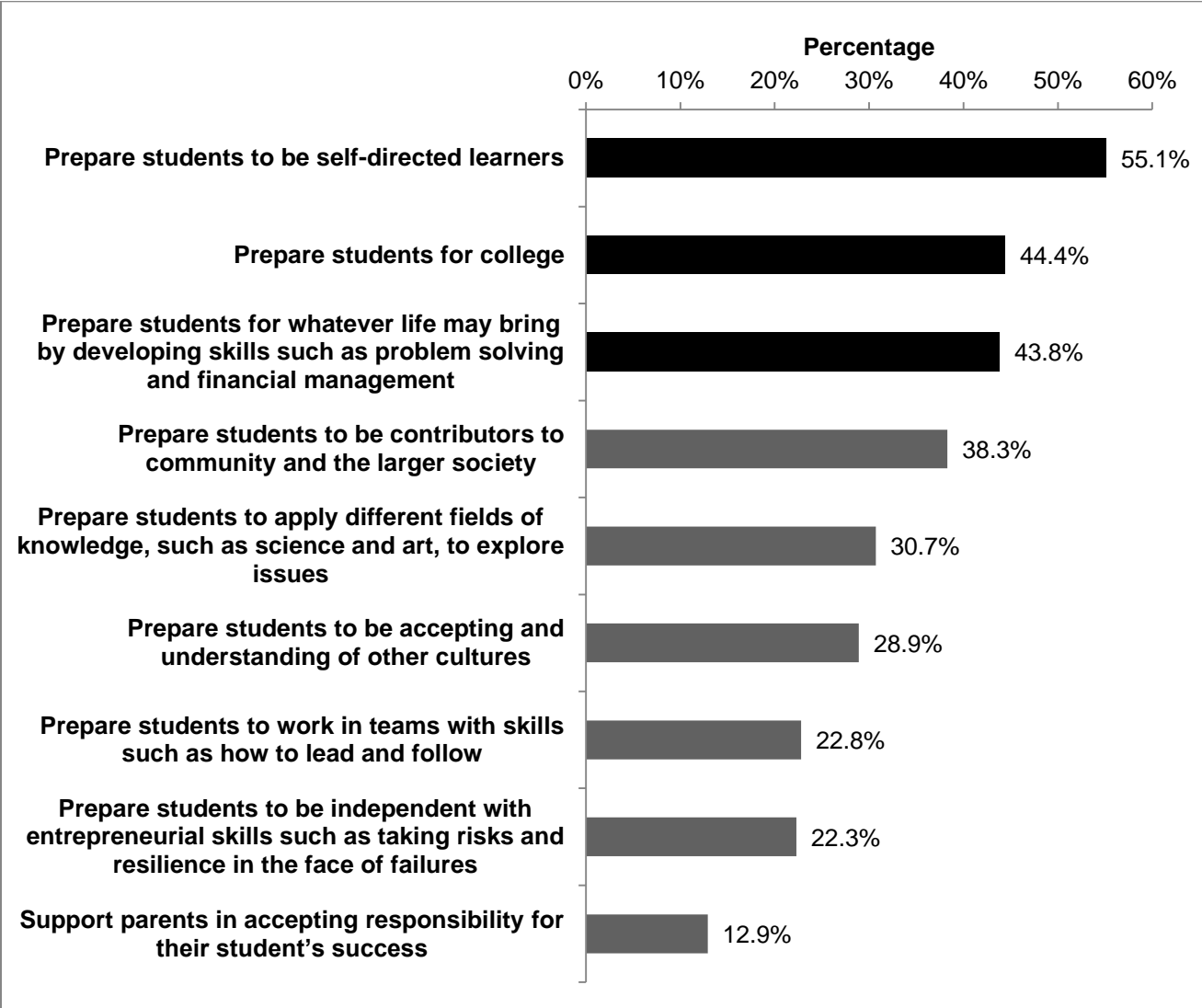
As we look to the future, Yellow Springs Schools need to be committed to:



Priorities that Yellow Springs Schools should focus on in the future:



Student outcomes that should guide the development of the Yellow Springs School District:



Public Forum

On June 8th, community members were invited to a public forum at the Yellow Springs High School. The forum was designed to engage participants in identifying initiatives that would advance strategic plan priorities. The priorities came from small group discussions and the community survey. The priorities included:

- Support Quality Teachers to Enhance Learning
- Integrate of Arts with Other Subjects such as Math and Science
- Achieve Financial Security by Developing New Sources of Revenue

- Develop a New School Culture Based on Performance, Flexibility, and Accountability
- Redesign the Curriculum to Foster the Application of Knowledge

Thirty-one individuals participated, including twelve Steering Committee members. The discussion took place in café style, meaning participants moved from priority to priority. The following summarizes themes for each priority.

Support Quality Teachers to Enhance Learning

- Focus on recruitment and retention
- The Board needs to ensure professional development for teachers and create a support system
- Develop methods for fair and honest performance evaluations
- Set standards/expectations
- Introduce merit pay
- Foster an environment or culture of respect and continuous improvement
- Shared responsibility – “We” are teachers, administration, parents, and students
- Quality teachers need an environment that is flexible, fluid, and passionate about learning and trusting

Integrate Arts with Other Subjects such as Math and Science

- Project-based learning that is collaborative and interdisciplinary
- Teach how to integrate disciplines in teaching
- Follow a model or develop a district model
- Teach all subjects
- Art illustrates integration of disciplines
- Use community resources to implement
- Students work on service projects in the community
- To integrate disciplines requires support such as planning time, professional development, and resource sharing

Achieve Financial Security by Developing New Sources of Revenue

- Establish a development office
- Market/sell services and curriculum
- Catalog potential assets
- Seek additional grants, endowments, private foundation, and alumni giving opportunities
- Use available land for revenue/conservation/educational purposes, e.g., building greenhouses or green energy sources
- Augment summer school program and market to students outside the district
- Open enrollment/distance learning
- Use what district has currently wisely and more efficiently
- Establish exactly who stands to benefit? Proceed from that point forward

Develop a New School Culture Based on Performance, Flexibility, and Accountability

- Student agency
- Explore more flex credits
- Celebrate successes
- Relevance of education
- Transparent/trusting environment
- Social/emotional learning
- Expand/define expectations together

Redesign the Curriculum to Foster the Application of Knowledge

- Utilize community resources
- Life skills (including values)
- Problem solving (group)
- Define desired student outcomes; design curriculum to achieve this

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