

Supplemental Notes for VISION 2020- Southington Public Schools Strategic Plan

The Question: What must the school board do in order to ensure all students the opportunity to be productive citizens and workers for the year 2020?

The Process:

- Form a committee of teacher leaders- 092 cohort graduates- to tackle this problem
- Define the stakeholders and solicit their opinions via Forums, Discussions, and Surveys:
 - Business Owners/Community Leaders
 - Elected and Appointed Officials
 - School Faculty and Staff
 - Parents and Students
- Analyze their feedback and summarize their priorities
 - Critical Thinking
 - Partnerships
 - Individualized Learning
 - Communication
 - Research and Development
- Formulate the plan – VISION 2020 and present to the Board of Education

The Plan:

Critical Thinking: Integrate Common Core principles and look to develop students as globally minded individuals. Provide students with the opportunities to know how to self-direct and self-correct. Begin to shift the teacher's role to facilitator and allow for students to take a more active role in the learning process.

Metacognition refers to higher order thinking that involves active control over the thinking processes involved in learning. Activities such as planning how to approach a given learning task, monitoring comprehension, and evaluating progress toward the completion of a task are metacognitive in nature. Because metacognition plays a critical role in successful learning it is important for both students and teachers. Metacognition has been linked with intelligence and it has been shown that those with greater metacognitive abilities tend to be more successful thinkers.

(<http://www.hent.org/world/rss/files/metacognition.htm>)

Partnerships: Require all students' opportunities for authentic learning experiences, which will apply their critical thinking skills. This will require a redefinition of graduation requirements to encourage partnerships and distance learning experiences. Partners can include business and community organizations and universities.

Individualized Learning: The focus is the individual student and their needs. This goes beyond differentiated instruction and incorporates the need for a more flexible school calendar. Learning can happen beyond the traditional school day. All students will need opportunities to develop their:

- Life Skills – Social/Emotional and Financial Literacy
- Critical Thinking – Adaptive Problem-Solving Skills
- Communication – Public Speaking and Active Listening Skills
- Global Citizenship – Early Second Language Instruction

These skills may be enhancements to existing curriculum or may require the development of new courses and learning opportunities.

Communication: Students must have strong oral and written communication skills and be able to engage with any audience - locally, nationally and internationally. In addition, technology must be equitable within all schools in the SPS district. Extracurricular opportunities which assist in the development of communication skills should be offered to all students.

Research and Development: Professional development among faculty and staff needs to include training on how to be more of a facilitator than a teacher of information. Teachers need opportunities to learn from each other and to work collaboratively across disciplines and buildings. Roles and responsibilities of school leadership and the Board of Education must be redefined to allow for a more streamlined approach to facilitate change in the district. As a district, we need to ensure that all students are being challenged and prepared to be successful.

What's Next:

VISION 2020 – is the guide. All district actions should connect to the guiding principles of this plan.

Within the next 3-5 years...investigate, evaluate and take action on:

- Learning is the constant; time is the variable (learning opportunities can happen at all times of the day and not only during the traditional school day)
- Curricular changes reflecting 21st Century Skills for global citizenship (seek opportunities for early second language instruction and distance learning)
- Equitable infrastructure – technology and safety (all buildings equipped with Wi-Fi; move from textbooks to e-books; safety concerns addressed equitably among all schools)
- Partnerships that create experiences beyond school (authentic learning experiences in conjunction with businesses and community members, colleges and universities, distance learning; providing for a flexible school calendar)
- Building staff capacity through professional development (allow for teacher collaboration across disciplines and professionally develop teachers to serve as facilitators)