



Manitou Springs School District 14 2021-22 Action Plan

We offer a “small town” educational environment, and we are driven by our core values of Relationships, Deep Learning, and Opportunity as we serve our children and our communities.

Manitou Springs School District 14 serves approximately 1400 students from Preschool to 12th Grade who reside in the communities of Manitou Springs, Cascade, Green Mountain Falls, Chipita Park, Crystal Park, and Cedar Heights. We serve “choice” students who come to our district from other locations in El Paso and Teller Counties.

Mission:

Manitou Springs District 14 is dedicated to:

- Providing a safe and caring learning environment
- Encouraging all students to reach their potential
- Preparing responsible citizens

Vision:

Responsible citizens contributing with knowledge and integrity to a dynamic world.

Core Values:

Relationships: We value authentic connections grounded in trust and respect between ALL people.

Deep Learning: Our community practices: dynamic, divergent, critical, and global thinking. We challenge each learner to master, transfer, and apply the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed for success.

Opportunity: We provide accessible and engaging opportunities for purposeful growth and visionary learning.

Strategic Outcomes (Year 2 of 5)

By the Year 2026:

1. All students will read at grade level or beyond.
2. All students will graduate on-time and will be college & career ready.
3. All students will be surrounded by highly effective staff who are continuously exploring and growing professionally.
4. All students and families will be engaged in school- and district-related activities that are connected to their interests, goals, talents, areas of growth, and best hopes for the present and



the future.

5. All students and staff will learn and thrive in clean, caring, safe, inclusive, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math), and Arts-integrated environments that are current, dynamic, collaborative, exciting, and creative.
6. All students will experience character and social-emotional learning experiences.
7. We will recruit, retain, and develop the best staff (in all positions).
8. We will eliminate subgroup gaps.
9. We will create strong communication systems by providing transparent information in clear, accurate, and timely methods while also seeking input from all stakeholders.
10. We will develop and implement a long-term capital improvement plan that includes a plan for technology.
11. We will develop and implement a complete and effective continuum of support that is available to all students, families, and staff.
12. We will maintain a strong and productive relationship between the Superintendent and the Board of Education.

Key Leverage Points for the 2021-22 School Year

1. Engage Staff Members Meaningfully in our Core Values, Key Leverage Points, and Strategic Outcomes
2. Strengthen Curriculum Alignment and Vertical Articulation Through a Robust Professional Learning Community Model
3. Implement a District-wide Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) Process
4. Improve the Quality of Feedback for Growth and Development
5. Strengthen Best, First Instruction Practices
6. Strengthen Family and Community Communication and Relationships

Theory of Action

If we use the school and district action plans as a roadmap for being intentional about focusing on the identified key leverage points, then there will be an increased likelihood that we strengthen relationships, deep learning, and opportunity for all students, staff, and families which will lead to achieving our strategic outcomes.

Why a District Action Plan?

A well-crafted and well-implemented Action Plan is able to achieve the preservation of what is wonderful about Manitou Springs School District 14 (MSSD) while also enhancing opportunities for all stakeholders, especially students. It serves as a road map to success and system of accountability. When an Action Plan focuses on the “right” Key Leverage Points, we will see that our intentional efforts lead to achieving the desired outcomes and make the biggest positive impact on the lives of others. According to Peter Senge, “The bottom line of systems thinking is leverage – seeing where actions and changes in structures can lead to significant, enduring improvements.” When the Action Plan is used as an essential tool to guide decision-making, resource allocation, ongoing reflection, staff development and retainment, and so



much more, leadership density across the district increases and an outward mindset can be realized.

*****Professional Learning Community*****

The importance of strong Professional Learning Communities in schools and districts has been shown in multiple studies, through educators' own experiences, and through an increase in [collective efficacy](#). PLCs are not grade level or department meetings that focus on schedules, after-school activities, grading policies, etc. The PLC model focuses on 4 questions:

- 1. What do we want all students to know and be able to do?*
- 2. How will we know if they learn it?*
- 3. How will we respond when some students do not learn?*
- 4. How will we extend the learning for students who are already able to demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and understanding?*

It is important to acknowledge that we have a wide-variety of experience and expertise in the area of engaging in and facilitating highly effective PLCs. The principals will spend a significant amount of time establishing best practices for the PLC. This same level of attention to implementation will first start with the Leadership Team. Ongoing feedback, reflection, and development will occur across the school year.

*****Late Start/Key Leverage Point Wednesdays*****

The shift to Late Start/Key Leverage Point Wednesdays will also help the District meet its goals. The District Leadership Team will plan the agenda for these "Key Leverage Point Wednesdays" to meet and exceed the Indicators of Success as we move to achieving our yearly goals and Strategic Outcomes (PLC and MTSS). The professional learning on some of those Wednesdays will allow each school to tend to each of the Key Leverage Points for the school and district in a thoughtful, planned, and intentional way.

Other Ongoing and New Initiatives Aligned to Strategic Outcomes:

- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Task Force Plan
- Partners for Healthy Choices--Trauma-Responsive School District (Colorado Springs Health Foundation grant)
- Partnership with Children's Hospital on their 6th Grade Building Resilience for Healthy Kids and Health Navigators
- Monthly District Accountability Committee meetings (BOE Standing Committees)
- Feedback and Evaluation Committee
- Salary and Compensation Committee
- Capital Improvement Committee
- Advanced Placement Chemistry course
- Arts Integration

**The Athletics & Activities Department will create a 6-12th Grade Action Plan for rollout August 2021.*

***The Ute Pass BOCES Executive Director in partnership with Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent and Director of Student Success will create an Exceptional Student Action Plan for rollout August 2021.*



Key Leverage Point #1:

Engage Staff Members Meaningfully in our Core Values, Key Leverage Points, and Strategic Outcomes

Why does this matter to MSSD?

Having a clear vision and direction toward achieving success and moving forward is essential for every organization. This mission-minded focus allows all stakeholders to know the pathway and how we will walk alongside each other during this journey. This is a journey. Our district's strategic outcomes are far from being short-sighted, especially knowing the impact great schools have on a child's life. The District's Action Plan, Key Leverage Points, Indicators of Success, and Strategic Outcomes must be reviewed, considered, and talked about frequently with all stakeholders.

When decisions are made about staffing, schedules, budgets, curriculum, assessments, feedback, professional development, etc., can we say the decision got us closer to achieving these strategic outcomes for our school district? During the Spring of 2021, all schools engaged in an Action Planning process. As a result of this important work, it will be critical that building leaders are consistently coming back to the school's action plan. Returning to the alignment between the district's leverage points and the schools' leverage points frequently will allow stakeholders to understand how we are all moving toward the same Strategic Outcomes. The leadership teams must be relentless in communicating why these Strategic Outcomes matter for the students, staff, and families of Manitou Springs School District 14. At the heart of this Key Leverage Point is leadership development, which sits at the core of the systems model and is the key contributor to organizational greatness.

Public education had the most difficult year (2020-21) due to the pandemic, and MSSD was impacted in many different ways. Our staff, students, and parents were tremendous along the way. It is important to mention that we will need to be intentional about tending to all Core Values (Relationships, Deep Learning, and Opportunity). Everything starts with relationships. This leverage point focuses on opportunities to spend time with others in meaningful ways so relationships can strengthen and we can achieve outcomes that are meaningful for all.

Key Leverage Point #2:

Strengthen Curriculum Alignment and Vertical Articulation Through a Robust Professional Learning Community Model

Why does this matter to MSSD?

- A. PLC: "The most promising strategy for sustained, substantive school improvement is developing the ability of school personnel to function as professional learning communities." This statement is the beginning of the introduction from the seminal work by Richard DeFour and Robert Eaker



titled; "Professional Learning Communities at Work." This statement encapsulates one reason we feel that it's imperative for all schools in the Manitou Springs School District to continually grow in the practice of functioning as members of a Professional Learning Community.

- B. Curriculum Alignment: A guaranteed and viable curriculum (GVC) ensures that all students have an equal opportunity to learn (OTL). Each student will have access to an effective or highly effective teacher, and access to the same content, knowledge, and skills in each section or class. (Marzano, 2003) This statement demonstrates the importance of utilizing a highly effective Professional Learning Community structure to do the work of answering the question; "What do students need to know and be able to do?"*

Key Leverage Point #3:

Implement a District-wide Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) Process

Why does this matter to MSSD?

Manitou Springs School District has pieces and parts of MTSS in each of our four schools. These have been implemented at a school level and there are opportunities for continued growth and continuity across all schools.

When schools and districts fully-embrace and embed these components into their organizational structure, systems alignment and substantive improvement can occur. An enabling context is established so that systems-level and stakeholder-level innovations can be initiated, implemented with fidelity, and maintained successfully over time. The goal and primary purpose of MTSS implementation is to improve outcomes for students, using:

- data for decision making,*
- evidence-based practices for student outcomes*
- systems which adults need in order to support implementation efforts.*

This aligns to building leadership density and collective efficacy.

Key Leverage Point #4:

Improve the Quality of Feedback for Growth and Development

Why does this matter to MSSD?

Every effective learning organization consistently provides feedback which is aligned to its core values and best practices. We value relationships, deep learning, and opportunity in MSSD, and to this end our leaders need to engage in feedback cycles with their constituents to promote continual growth and development in all three core values. When we, as a district, engage in regular feedback processes we greatly enhance the opportunity for greater and deeper student learning. Additionally, this feedback must



not be one directionally or stagnant. This will require opportunities for peer-to-peer feedback, educator-to-school leader, student feedback, and parent feedback.

Key Leverage Point #5:

Strengthen Best, First Instruction Practices

Why does this matter to MSSD?

It is important to acknowledge that we have a wide-variety of experience and expertise in the area of educators providing best, first instruction . This Key Leverage Point is aligned to the PLC, MTSS, and Feedback Key Leverage Points.

*Every student deserves access to high quality instruction. Great teaching and learning is the great equalizer for all students. “**Best, First Instruction** aims to give **all** students the **best** opportunity to learn standards-based, grade-level content and skills the **first** time they receive instruction. Best First Instruction can be understood as a framework combining culturally responsive teaching, practice-based teacher learning, and the implementation of high-quality academic standards and curriculum. Together, BFI should:*

- **Build Relationships:** *Best First Instruction should deepen student agency through caring, positive, and authentic connections with peers and adults.*
- **Meet the Needs of All Students:** *Best First Instruction should include accessible, equitable, and flexible instruction to meet the changing needs of diverse student populations.*
- **Create Relevancy:** *Best First Instruction should engage students in authentic, meaningful, real-world, and engaging work.*
- **Foster Disciplinary Literacy:** *Best First Instruction should position students to work, think, talk, and plan as experts in the content would.”*

While best, first instruction (Tier I) is well understood in the field and occurring in many classes across the district, there are opportunities to strengthen these practices in all of our classes across the school district.

Key Leverage Point #6:

Strengthen Family and Community Communication and Relationships

Why does this matter to MSSD?

The relationship between a student’s school and parents is critical. Parents, families, and schools must be able to collaborate, communicate, and problem-solve together in open, honest, and engaging ways. After three semesters of families really only being able to participate in-person with after-school activities, there



is a great responsibility to ensure that families are welcomed back warmly, openly, and intentionally. Parents have communicated that it was difficult not being able to be in their child's school.

As mentioned in Leverage Point 1, last year was an extremely challenging school year for the world and MSSD. It will be important that we tend to relationships in ways that allow for connection, play, recognition, listening, and understanding.

A review of decades of research conducted in support of this Key Leverage Point indicates that when parents are involved, students have:

- *Higher grades, test scores, and graduation rates*
- *Better school attendance*
- *Increased motivation and better self-esteem*
- *Lower rates of suspension*
- *Decreased use of drugs and alcohol*
- *Fewer instances of violent behavior*

In addition, through authentic partnerships with parents, schools gain:

- *Improved teacher morale*
- *Higher ratings of teachers by parents*
- *More support from families*
- *Higher student achievement*
- *A better reputation in the community*