

# Avonworth School District

Strategic Plan  
2020-2025



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# Foreword

Dear Avonworth School Community Member,

It is with great pleasure and satisfaction that I share with you the 2020-2025 Avonworth School District Strategic Plan. This plan has been the culmination of nearly one year's work to develop the areas of focus, strategies, and actions that will ensure that our students gain the learning experiences that will enable them to continue to grow academically, socially, and emotionally so that they become innovative thinkers and creative contributors to our world.

Prior to the start of strategic planning, a district-wide survey was distributed to parents, students, and staff members. The survey revealed impressions from the previous strategic plan, as well as opinions on current strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for our school community to consider.

The strategic planning process was an inclusive endeavor that included over 50 members of our school community. Students, parents, teachers, service personnel, administrators, board members, and community members came together during several all-day sessions to participate in activities that brought to the surface the important issues in our district. Strategies and actions were then developed to bring the needed attention and resources in order to make progress in these focus areas.

The strategic plan is meant to be a compass that we can use to stay on track so that we remain focused on the priorities identified by our committee. Therefore, this plan will be reviewed often. Administrative goals will be built from the actions identified in the plan. Likewise, progress on the plan will be reviewed annually with our board of school directors.

I am very proud of the work of our committee and I hope you enjoy this examination of both the process and product that is the Avonworth School District Strategic Plan 2020-2025. Thank you for your continued support as we work together to ensure that Avonworth School District is a special place of learning for all.

With kindest regards,



Thomas W. Ralston, Ed. D.  
Superintendent  
Avonworth School District





# District Snapshot

The Avonworth School District is recognized as one of the more progressive and innovative school districts in our region. District administration and staff strive daily to provide Avonworth School District students with a K-12 curriculum that promotes equity, inclusion, innovation and creativity, as well as voice and choice.

## People

- ▶ 1,850 students (15% growth since 2015)
- ▶ 159 teachers & paraprofessionals
- ▶ 31 facilities & support staff
- ▶ 14 administrators

## Community

- ▶ 12,000 residents
- ▶ 10.54 square miles
- ▶ 8 miles northwest of Pittsburgh
- ▶ Boroughs of Ben Avon, Ben Avon Heights, Emsworth & Townships of Ohio and Killbuck

## Facilities



**Primary Center**  
Grades K - 2



**Elementary School**  
Grades 3 - 6



**Middle School**  
Grades 7 - 8

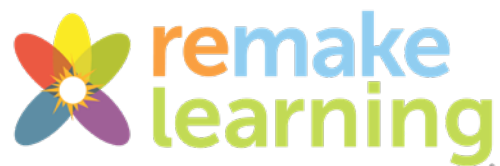


**High School**  
Grades 9 - 12



# Affiliations

The Avonworth School District is a proud member of or has been recognized by the following organizations. *Click on each logo to learn more about the organization.*



# Pathways to the Future

Avonworth School District is committed to empowering students with the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and experiences they need to succeed in the future.

To prepare students for the fast-paced, ever-changing world beyond high school, the Avonworth School District believes in providing voice and choice in our students' education through authentic, project-based learning experiences. Through these educational experiences, students develop creativity, communication skills, collaboration skills, and the ability to self-advocate.



## Personalized Learning

Students explore their interests and connect academic learning to real-world experiences.

- ▶ **1:1:** A digital device for every student
- ▶ **Redefined Counselor Roles:** Matching students' academic achievement, social needs, and future goals
- ▶ **Personal Pathways:** Connecting student interests to future careers



## Interdisciplinary Learning

Students use what they learn in multiple subjects to better prepare for college and career.

- ▶ **Project-Based Learning:** Students solve real-world challenges
- ▶ **Professional Development:** Teachers trained in interdisciplinary methods
- ▶ **Co-Teaching:** Teachers work in teams to blend multiple subjects



## Use of Space & Time

Students learn in more creative and collaborative settings and have the time to dive deeper.

- ▶ **Flexible Classrooms:** Teachers can combine rooms and rearrange furniture
- ▶ **Makerspaces & STEAM Labs:** Dedicated facilities for hands-on learning
- ▶ **Modern Schedules:** Later start times and longer time blocks



# Power of Partnerships

We collaborate with local and national partners to ensure that Avonworth students experience an education that extends beyond the walls of our school.

## Regional & National Networks

- ▶ Future Ready Schools
- ▶ New Tech Network
- ▶ Remake Learning
- ▶ Digital Promise League of Innovative Schools

## Employers & Career Connections

- ▶ PartnerUP
- ▶ Catalyst Connection
- ▶ German Chamber of Commerce
- ▶ Junior Achievement of PA

## Colleges & Universities

- ▶ Carlow University
- ▶ La Roche University
- ▶ Robert Morris University
- ▶ Rochester Institute of Technology
- ▶ University of Pittsburgh

## Local Partners

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| ▶ Alcosan                                       | ▶ Global Links                              | Corps Association                                  |
| ▶ American Legion Post 80                       | ▶ Greater Pittsburgh Masonic Center         | ▶ Pittsburgh Center For Arts and Media             |
| ▶ Anchor and Anvil Coffee                       | ▶ Heinz History Center                      | ▶ Pittsburgh Glass Center                          |
| ▶ The Andy Warhol Museum                        | ▶ Hello Neighbor                            | ▶ Pittsburgh Penguins                              |
| ▶ Avonworth Community Park                      | ▶ Highmark Caring Place                     | ▶ Produce to People                                |
| ▶ Avonworth Historical Society                  | ▶ The Holocaust Center of Pittsburgh        | ▶ Robert Morris University Rooney Scholars Program |
| ▶ Ben Avon Fall Festival and House Tour         | ▶ Japan American Society of Pittsburgh      | ▶ Scholastic                                       |
| ▶ Beverly's Birthdays                           | ▶ Jewish Family & Community Services        | ▶ Teen Screen Film Pittsburgh                      |
| ▶ Bhutanese Community Association of Pittsburgh | ▶ Jubilee Soup Kitchen                      | ▶ Treasurers for Children                          |
| ▶ Boucek's Battalion                            | ▶ Junior Achievement                        | ▶ Tree Pittsburgh                                  |
| ▶ Boy and Girl Scouts                           | ▶ Kennywood Park                            | ▶ U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services        |
| ▶ Carnegie Museum of Art                        | ▶ Leukemia & Lymphoma Society               | ▶ University of Pittsburgh Global Studies Center   |
| ▶ Carnegie Science Center                       | ▶ Mattress Factory                          | ▶ Veterans Breakfast Club                          |
| ▶ Casa San Jose                                 | ▶ Office of Pittsburgh Mayor William Peduto | ▶ Welcoming Pittsburgh                             |
| ▶ The Children's Home                           | ▶ Ohio Township Parks and Recreation        | ▶ Western Pennsylvania Conservancy                 |
| ▶ Choices Pregnancy Services                    | ▶ One Tree Per Child                        | ▶ World Affairs Council of Pittsburgh              |
| ▶ Classrooms Without Borders                    | ▶ Pittsburgh Area Peace                     |  |
| ▶ Engineers Without Borders                     |   |  |



# About the Planning Process

The process for developing this strategic plan took place across the 2019-2020 school year. It was important to include all stakeholders in the process of creating the next strategic plan for the Avonworth School District. Invitations were sent to stakeholders from the following groups to create our Strategic Planning Committee: community members, parents, students, career center, instructional staff, paraprofessionals, administration, and school board.

## Step 1: Gathering Input from Stakeholders

Early in the 2019-2020 school year, surveys were sent to parents, students, and staff to gather input. The surveys asked for input on satisfaction, our current mission and belief statements, District communication, and what characteristics are most important for Avonworth graduates to possess.

### What characteristics are most important for Avonworth graduates to possess?

*Percentage of students, parents, and staff that selected the following characteristics.  
(Percentages do not add up to 100% as participants could select more than one characteristic.)*

Student Responses	Parent Responses	Staff Responses
Collaboration - 58%	Problem-solving - 72%	Problem-solving - 60%
Leadership - 50%	Adaptability - 45%	Perseverance - 48%
Adaptability - 46%	Motivation - 39%	Written Communication - 42%
Motivation - 44%	Oral Communication - 39%	Oral Communication - 38%
Perseverance - 39%	Written Communication - 38%	Adaptability - 35%
		Content Knowledge - 35%
		Motivation - 35%

## Step 2: Strategic Planning Meetings with Stakeholders

More than 50 community stakeholders participated in four stakeholder meetings over the course of the 2019-2020 school year. See a complete list of participants on page 18.

### October 24, 2019: Understanding Our Why

The first meeting focused on reviewing our current strategic plan, identifying what stakeholders are most proud of, reviewing highlights from the survey data collected, and learning about the remaining strategic planning process.





### **November 19, 2019: Development of Goals, Strategies, & Actions**

The second meeting focused on developing the strategic goals and actions for focus areas identified in stakeholder surveys:

- Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
- Career
- Curriculum & Instruction
- Mental Health
- Culture



### **January 20, 2020: Portrait of an Avonworth Graduate**

The third meeting focused on defining success and developing the portrait of an Avonworth graduate. A graduate portrait is a way for communities to develop a shared vision for what each and every student in the district will experience over the course of their education. See our portrait of a graduate on page 10.

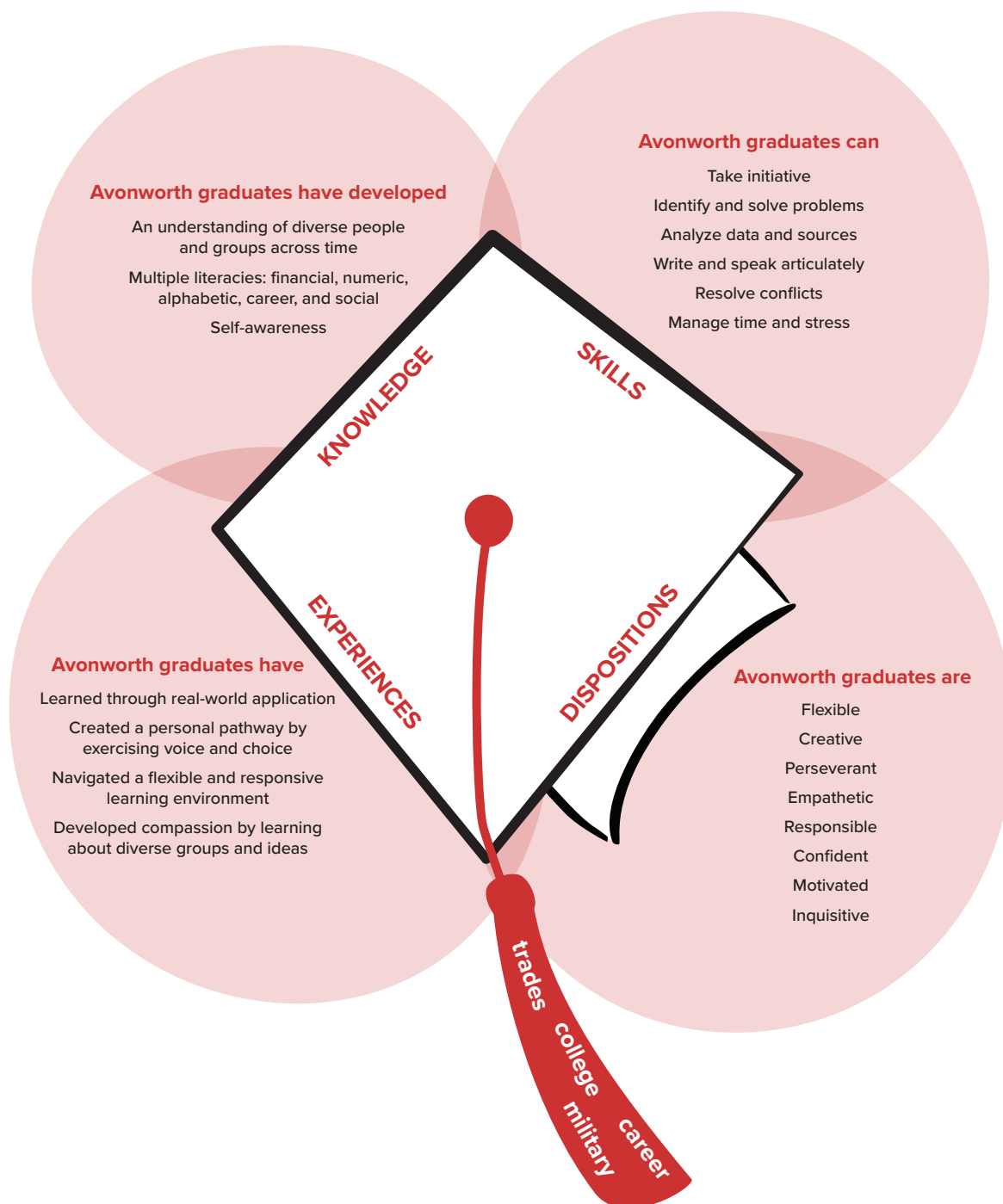
### **March 18, 2020: Revision of Mission, Beliefs, & Creating Pillars** *(canceled due to COVID-19)*

The final meeting focused on revising our mission and belief statements, creating pillars for our district, and gathering final feedback on the Goals, Strategies, and Actions that were created during the process. Due to COVID-19, this meeting was canceled and our administrative team took on this work. Dr. Ralston reported the final mission, belief statements, and pillars to the Strategic Planning Committee via email.



# Portrait of an Avonworth Graduate

Empowering students with everything they need for college, career, and life starts with rigorous academic content and extends to critical thinking, collaboration, communication, creativity, empathy, and self-advocacy. With input from all District stakeholders, the strategic planning committee created this Portrait of an Avonworth Graduate to capture the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and experiences Avonworth students acquire by the time they graduate.



# Foundations

## Mission

The Avonworth School District empowers students through authentic experiences to become innovative thinkers and creative contributors to our world.

## Beliefs

1. Students' strengths and talents are nurtured in a safe and supportive environment.
2. The school district supports diversity, empathy, and respect.
3. Developing essential skills such as collaboration, critical thinking, and communication prepares students to navigate a complex world.
4. Learning takes place within and beyond our school walls.
5. The school district and community partner for mutual benefit.

## Pillars

*These pillars help us bring our beliefs to life in our day-to-day experiences at school and in the community.*



**Learn Together**



**Be Kind**



**Make a Difference**



**Actions Matter**



**You Belong**



# Strategic Plan Overview

Our 2020-2025 Strategic Plan includes five focus areas:

## **Curriculum & Instruction**

*See details on page 13*

Create and maintain a culturally responsive curriculum aligned to the expectations of the Pennsylvania Core Standards and that will provide learning essential to preparing Avonworth students to be productive members of society.

## **Culture, Communications, & Relationships**

*See details on page 14*

Continue to build a welcoming District culture through effective communications and strong stakeholder relationships.

## **Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion**

*See details on page 15*

Continue to develop and maintain an inclusive experience for students, staff, and community that promotes a sense of belonging for all.

## **Mental Health & Social-Emotional Development**

*See details on page 16*

Create and maintain a District framework that supports students' mental, social, and emotional health.

## **Career Readiness**

*See details on page 17*

Provide authentic learning opportunities for students across diverse careers.

For each focus area, the District has identified an overall goal and 3-4 specific strategies for achieving it. On pages 13-17, you'll find details about those strategies and the actions we plan to take for each.





# Curriculum & Instruction

## Goal

Create and maintain a culturally responsive curriculum aligned to the expectations of the Pennsylvania Core Standards and that will provide learning essential to preparing Avonworth students to be productive members of society.

Strategies for reaching our goal	Actions we will take
<p>Ensure curricula and program materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Align to standards</li> <li>▶ Address core literacies (numeracy, digital, civics, leadership, coding, reading, social-emotional development)</li> <li>▶ Build foundational and essential skills (collaboration, communication, teamwork, empathy, responsibility, creativity)</li> <li>▶ Promote cultural responsiveness (multiple perspectives, representation, social justice)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Implement a curriculum evaluation and review cycle <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Include a tool in the curriculum cycle to evaluate curricula for its cultural responsiveness</li> <li>❑ Conduct a K-12 literary canon review for cultural responsiveness</li> </ul> </li> <li>❑ Review and create maps for the following K-12 student experiences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Project-based learning</li> <li>❑ Maker experiences/opportunities</li> <li>❑ Computer science</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Ensure the continued growth of our arts programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Create a strings program</li> <li>❑ Evaluate and consider high school arts options</li> </ul>
Ensure exploration and promotion of career and technical opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Implement programming at the elementary and secondary level to improve opportunities for career and college exploration</li> <li>❑ Host events to introduce parents and families to career, college, and other post-secondary pathways</li> </ul>
Ensure professional development continues to promote instructional practices aligned with the expectations of Pennsylvania Core Standards and promotes equity and inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Develop a professional development plan that will promote instructional practices aligned with curriculum &amp; instruction goals</li> <li>❑ Implement a new teacher induction session focused on unconscious bias, equity, and inclusion</li> </ul>
Ensure students have choices and opportunities to personalize their educational experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Revise graduation requirements to include opportunities for student choice</li> <li>❑ Evaluate project-based learning K-12 for student voice and choice opportunities</li> </ul>



# Culture, Communications, & Relationships

## Goal

Continue to build a welcoming District culture through effective communications and strong stakeholder relationships.

Strategies for reaching our goal	Actions we will take
Streamline communications to support all stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Implement streamlined communication systems and procedures</li> <li>□ Adopt a new Student Information System</li> </ul>
Build a strong school-community culture through the engagement of all stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Create engagement opportunities for community members including volunteer or project opportunities to attend school-related events</li> <li>□ Design an alumni relations plan to engage alumni to support District and school programs</li> </ul>
Foster supportive relationships that place an emphasis on opportunity, equality, and acceptance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Create engagement opportunities for community members including volunteer or project opportunities to attend school-related events</li> <li>□ Design an alumni relations plan to engage alumni to support District and school programs</li> </ul>
Foster supportive relationships that place an emphasis on opportunity, equality, and acceptance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Develop a comprehensive student mentoring program K-12</li> </ul>
Develop success measure benchmarks for the District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Identify measures of success that focus on holistic growth and achievement for all Avonworth students</li> <li>□ Publish success results as part of the Annual Report</li> </ul>



# Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

## Goal

Continue to develop and maintain an inclusive experience for students, staff, and community that promotes a sense of belonging for all.

Strategies for reaching our goal	Actions we will take
<p>Review curricula to address:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Cultural sensitivity</li> <li>▶ Literary canon</li> <li>▶ Social justice</li> <li>▶ Multiple perspectives</li> <li>▶ Representation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Institute curriculum cycle that includes a tool to review curricula for cultural responsiveness</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Review K-12 literary canon (books, narratives, texts) for cultural responsiveness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Representation</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Multiple perspectives</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Social justice</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>Provide ongoing training to school district stakeholders</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Explore restorative justice practices</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Professional learning for cultural sensitivity, social justice, and equity in teaching</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Conduct parent workshops for multiple topics related to diversity, equity, and inclusion</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Introduce a new teacher induction session focused on unconscious bias</li> </ul>
<p>Provide authentic opportunities for students, staff, and parents to engage in diverse experiences</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Conduct a multi-cultural festival</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Create a Social Justice Club</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Explore partnerships with diverse schools</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Strengthen intergenerational partnerships with senior communities in the District</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Attract and retain a diverse staff</li> </ul>
<p>Create a process to review, assess, and communicate cultural responsiveness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Conduct an equity audit and act on recommendations</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Conduct annual stakeholder surveys for feedback</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Implement No Place for Hate program at Middle and High School</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Review District policies and procedures for alignment to best practices when responding to offenses regarding race and discrimination</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Develop and communicate a strong, consistent message regarding inclusivity</li> </ul>



# Mental Health & Social-Emotional Development

## Goal

Create and maintain a District framework that supports students' mental, social, and emotional health.

Strategies for reaching our goal	Actions we will take
Align resources to the social-emotional needs of students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Conduct a needs assessment via Pennsylvania Youth Survey (PAYS) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Identify and prioritize needs</li> <li>□ Student perspective and voice</li> </ul> </li> <li>□ Create a topic-based resource hub available to students, staff, and community</li> <li>□ Review staffing needs: social worker, contract therapists, additional school counselors, psychologists, nurses</li> </ul>
Build opportunities to increase skills and knowledge that will help families and staff support the mental health needs of students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Provide professional development for staff based upon identified student need areas</li> <li>□ Provide opportunities for co-learning with families <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Explore creative opportunities for format/outreach</li> </ul> </li> <li>□ Identify and utilize a universal screening tool</li> <li>□ Utilize District communication channels to communicate resources to parents and staff</li> </ul>
Build and organize curricula to support the social-emotional growth of students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Revise and evaluate the District's 339 Plan annually</li> <li>□ Formalize a K-12 social-emotional curriculum</li> </ul>
Develop practices that are responsive to the social-emotional growth of students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Review discipline and restorative justice practices and policies K-12</li> <li>□ Have staff members attend the Trauma-informed Approaches for Education train-the-trainer workshop to prepare them to provide professional development for staff</li> <li>□ Provide professional development for staff based upon identified areas of student need</li> </ul>





# Career Readiness

## Goal

Provide authentic learning opportunities for students across diverse careers.

Strategies for reaching our goal	Actions we will take
Develop a well-articulated college and career framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Integrate essential skills into K-12 curricula                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Utilize project-based learning and instructional practices that develop agency, collaboration, and oral and written communication skills</li> </ul> </li> <li>□ Revise and evaluate District Counseling Plan annually</li> <li>□ Create and implement a K-12 career exploration plan</li> <li>□ Examine and assess graduation project requirements</li> </ul>
Increase knowledge, exposure, and experiences related to post-secondary opportunities available through the trades	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Continue development of 9th-grade seminar class to involve career exploration/awareness</li> <li>□ Explore additional internship, apprentice, and work-study opportunities</li> <li>□ Utilize District communication channels to educate parents on trades and non-college opportunities</li> <li>□ Provide learning opportunities for teachers through the Teacher in the Workplace grant</li> </ul>
Leverage stakeholder connections to broaden opportunities for career exposure for students and staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Create a database of our diverse alumni and community partners ready to assist students and families with:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Applying to and attending college</li> <li>□ Career and technical training</li> <li>□ Apprenticeships and other pathways</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



# Acknowledgements

## Avonworth Strategic Plan Steering Committee 2019 - 2020

### School Board

- ◆ Patrick Stewart
- ◆ Sandra Bolain
- ◆ Dave Oberdick
- ◆ Yu-Ling Cheng Behr

### Community

- ◆ Tom Shipley
- ◆ Herb Hartle
- ◆ Melanie Hughes-Holcomb
- ◆ Ed Freel
- ◆ Gregory Knowles
- ◆ Margaret Dudash

### Primary School

#### Teachers and staff:

- ◆ Karen Russell
- ◆ Meghan Kelly
- ◆ Becky Marszalek (AESPA President)

#### Parents and community members:

- ◆ Linda Morgan (PTA President)
- ◆ Nicole Smith
- ◆ Angela Klaum

### Elementary School

#### Teachers and staff:

- ◆ Claire Pappas
- ◆ Tessa Babcock
- ◆ Sara Osborn

#### Parents and community members:

- ◆ Amber Powell
- ◆ Nora Silvey

### Middle School

#### Teachers and staff:

- ◆ Jason Smith
- ◆ Julie Tullar
- ◆ Michael Warren

#### Parents and community members:

- ◆ Torri Robinson
- ◆ Beth Schuster
- ◆ Cory Bonnet
- ◆ Jodi Walsh

### High School

#### Teachers and staff:

- ◆ Emily Hickman
- ◆ Jen Wickert
- ◆ Colleen Barcaskey
- ◆ Jill Schumaker

#### Counselor:

- ◆ Nicole Levis

#### Parents and community members:

- ◆ Jackie Karwoski
- ◆ Bridget Goetz
- ◆ Lisa Otstot
- ◆ Jessica Wright

#### A.W. Beattie Career Center:

- ◆ Kim Zylinski (parent)

#### Students:

- ◆ Gillian Tokar
- ◆ Hannah Palmer
- ◆ Jackson Habala
- ◆ Fabian Vazquez

### District Administration

- ◆ Tom Ralston, Superintendent
- ◆ Jeff Hadley, Assistant Superintendent
- ◆ Jessica Taylor, Director of Student Services
- ◆ Scott Miller, Primary Center Principal
- ◆ Bill Battistone, Elementary School Principal
- ◆ Mike Hall, Middle School Principal
- ◆ Keera Dwulit, High School Principal
- ◆ Brad Waters, Director of Fiscal Management & Support Services
- ◆ Russell Patterson, Intern
- ◆ Zach Zabransky, Intern

