

Overview

This Strategic Plan for the Thetford Elementary School (TES) addresses the next five year period (2011-2016) in the school's development. It builds on the learning and achievements under the school's two previous strategic plans, and reflects the thoughtful contributions of the many Thetford community members who participated in the public forums and survey we conducted as part of this effort.

This document is not intended as a management plan and therefore does not prescribe management procedures or other day-to-day aspects of operating the school. It assumes the continuation of, but does not focus on, established TES values, practices and programs. Likewise, it assumes a continuing commitment to important achievements over the last five years, for example: revision of the math curriculum, introduction of a foreign language program, introduction of inquiry-based science instruction, and a stronger emphasis on teaching students healthy and "green" practices.

Instead, the Strategic Plan focuses on the goals and key objectives for the next five years. For each of these objectives, the plan identifies strategies, measures and outcomes. The purpose of this focus and structure is to provide the School Board and TES staff a practical, "living" document to guide them in their program planning. It is brief enough to be accessible and includes sufficient specificity that school leaders can use it to track progress.

The plan was drafted in the 2010-2011 school year by the Strategic Planning Committee, composed of the Chair of the School Board, the TES principal, TES staff, and Thetford community members. In addition to seeking public input, the committee carefully considered both TES administration and School Board priorities. The committee reviewed the 2007-2011 Strategic Plan and its implementation, the priorities expressed in the most recent Thetford School District Report, and the Thetford Academy Strategic Plan.

On behalf of both TES and the School Board, we wish to express our shared appreciation for the many people who contributed to this report. We are grateful for the community's thoughtful participation in this process, and especially for the long hours and hard work by Kathleen Cunneen, Matthias Senger, Laura Shepard, Josselyn Swett, James Tierney, Aimee Toth and Joanna Waldman. Thank you for your service.

Sincerely,

Keith Thompson
Principal
Thetford Elementary School

Elise Tillinghast
Chair
for the Thetford Town District
School Board

Introduction

The Thetford community is strongly committed to public education from pre-K through 12th grade. This education includes each child's acquisition of the knowledge, skills and love of learning necessary for each stage of that child's academic development. It also includes nurturing each child's sense of self-worth, respect for others, community-mindedness, and overall emotional and physical well-being.

The *Thetford Elementary School 2011 – 2016 Strategic Plan* addresses the education of Thetford students in grades K-6. The plan's purpose is to provide the Thetford Town School District Board of Directors and the TES staff with a road map that will inform planning and governance decisions for the school during the next five years. It constitutes a key document that has critical relevance to decision makers in their discussions regarding issues such as academic priorities, allocation of resources, public communication and aspirations for the cultural tone of the school. To that end, the plan includes a concisely expressed list of goals, objectives, and strategies with measurable outcomes by means of which the School Board and staff can be held accountable.

Goal 1 Our children will have the knowledge and skills to succeed in the next phase of their development.

We seek to challenge students across all subject areas in ways that are motivational to children, matching the challenge to the child. We recognize each child as an individual. Our instructional program should encourage each child's uniqueness and foster pride in that child's sense of self worth. Part of achieving this is recognizing what each child's next developmental step. We will provide a rigorous academic environment with the appropriate level of support for children to achieve their goals.

Objective 1.1. Cultivate a literate community in which students read and write with clarity, fluency, and voice.

TES strives to provide the best literacy practices. Our literacy instruction addresses the importance of communicating ideas in unique voices and having access to a variety of writing strategies. Children shall be exposed to diverse

literary genres so that they can identify and apply text features in their own writing, thereby enriching their literary skills.

Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Identify text features within a genre and apply these traits to their own writing
- Implement appropriate writing process strategies
- Access basic writing tools including spelling, grammar, writing conventions with ease and confidence
- Find satisfaction in communicating ideas in their unique voices

Strategies

- 1.1.1 Implement best literacy practices and research, e.g. Katie Wood Ray, Fountas and Pinnell
- 1.1.2 School-wide scheduling that supports balanced literacy block: reading, writing, spelling
- 1.1.3 Efficient and effective grouping of children
- 1.1.4 Utilizing district-wide professional development that supports TES literacy goals
- 1.1.5 Integrating support services to maximize student learning

Measures

- Performance on Writing Test, Performance on Primary Observation Assessment (POA), and other useful measures

Objective 1.2. Advance students' critical thinking skills in order to support the scientific inquiry process.

TES recognizes the critical thinking skills that are necessary to succeed in the world. To promote scientific thinking, all students will be given opportunities to develop observation skills about the world around them. These observation skills will help students utilize the scientific method to form hypotheses and assess their validity. Students will be able to acquire knowledge by engaging in inquiry-based science learning.

Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Make observations about the world around them
- Utilize instructional scaffolding (building upon prior knowledge to gain new learning)
- Form a hypothesis and assess its validity

Strategies

- 1.2.1 Application of inquiry-based scientific-thinking model to curriculum
- 1.2.2 Implementation of differentiated instruction and curriculum embedding
Bloom's Taxonomy as a method for generating and advancing critical thinking skills
- 1.2.3 Continued implementation of place-based learning environments in an effort to cultivate appreciation and stewardship in curriculum

Measures

- Performance on Science NECAP or successor tests

Objective 1.3 Develop a technology-rich learning community.

Acknowledging the rapid change and growth in technology, TES works to encourage student confidence in approaching, learning about and using a variety of new technologies. Children will learn various applications through project-based experiences. Teachers will implement Vermont Instructional Technology Grade Expectations as a systematic guide that teaches necessary skills in a way that simultaneously advances curriculum content.

Outcomes

- Students will demonstrate proficiency in grade level skills as outlined in the Vermont Instructional Technology Grade Expectations
- Students will have confidence in approaching and learning about new technologies
- Students will have a broad repertoire of tools to accomplish learning tasks efficiently

Strategies

- 1.3.1 Implement project-based teaching of technology in an age appropriate way
- 1.3.2 Integrating technology throughout curriculum
- 1.3.3 Designing learning opportunities in which technology tools are used to advance curriculum content
- 1.3.4 Development of skills based on Vermont Instructional Technology Grade Expectations

Measures

- Performance on Vermont Instructional Technology Grade Expectation Checklist,
- Student projects and presentations

Objective 1.4 Match student needs with curriculum, while recognizing our responsibility to Vermont state learning objectives and maintaining continuity within our curriculum.

Our commitment to provide differentiated instruction to TES students should enable all students to:

- Access the curriculum with the appropriate level of support
- Extend their learning when the primary objective is achieved
- Utilize individual learning strategies that advance skill development

TES students who are struggling will have opportunities to meet state learning objectives for their grade levels through small group support and other learning resources. When appropriate, teachers will work to offer enrichment in ways that complement the curriculum.

Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Access the curriculum with the appropriate level of support
- Extend their learning when primary objectives are achieved
- Utilize learning strategies that allow them to progress
- Draw on additional knowledge from other resources

Strategies

- 1.4.1 Utilize formative and anecdotal data and assessment to make informed decisions on what the “next step” would be for individuals
- 1.4.2 Support learning for those struggling to meet state learning objectives for their grade level (small groups, RAP, Learning Center)
- 1.4.3 When appropriate for those exceeding the standard, provide enrichment within the classroom in a manner that complements our curriculum
- 1.4.4 Identify when additional learning resources are necessary: develop 504 Plans, and IEPs for students that need accommodations to reach learning objectives
- 1.4.5 Communicate with parents to share strategies to support their child
- 1.4.6 Facilitate access to resources outside TES, including volunteers

Measures

- POA data and classroom grouping, IEP, 504 plan, SST, NECAP and successor tests, anecdotal and formative testing within classroom.

Goal 2 Our children will have age appropriate knowledge and skills to lead to life-long habits of physical and emotional health.

TES strives for academic rigor and healthy living strategies that will enrich children's lives.

Objective 2.1 Enrich children's lives physically, emotionally, and intellectually through varied outdoor experiences.

TES students will have a wide array of options to enrich their lives through outdoor experiences. Students will be provided with daily outdoor activities. Students will be afforded the opportunity to participate in both competitive and non-competitive sports programs and other outdoor activities. Nature has a restorative quality that helps children develop both physically and emotionally. Children's interactions with nature will promote environmental stewardship and sustainability.

Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Have the knowledge and skills to participate in both competitive and non-competitive sports programs
- Be physically active every day
- Utilize outdoor activity to enhance physical and emotional health
- Promote environmental sustainability

Strategies

- 2.1.1 Introduction and practice of a wide variety of sports fundamentals
- 2.1.2 Incorporating nature and outdoor spaces into learning when possible
- 2.1.3 Continued expansion of place-based curriculum K-6
- 2.1.4 Provide opportunities for students to participate in competitive and non-competitive sporting programs both in and out of school (e.g., ski program, connections with recreation dept.)
- 2.1.5 Expansion of outdoor space opportunities for learning and playing
- 2.1.6 Continue to provide outdoor recess

Measures

- Extent of use of school's outdoor spaces
- Level of integration within curriculum

Objective 2.2 Promote a positive climate that encourages respect, tolerance and fairness.

TES is dedicated to teaching our students cooperative skills in all interactions. We will therefore promote respectful and responsible decision-making, as well as respect for and sensitivity to the rights, feelings, and property of others, especially in the context of a diverse student population.

Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Respond to disagreements through attentive and considerate communication
- Exercise cooperative skills in all academic and social interactions and contexts
- Demonstrate respectful and responsible decision-making
- Respect the rights, feelings, and property of others
- Seek resources within their home and school environments when problems arise

Strategies

- 2.2.1 Preserving/upholding an inclusive and supportive environment that also promotes communication between and among all members of the school community (including, students, parents, staff, and School Board members)
- 2.2.2 Implementation of TES Mission Statement, advocating kindness, understanding, and empathy.
- 2.2.3 Behavioral monitoring in accordance with TES three-tiered discipline system
- 2.2.4 School-wide teaching of conflict-resolution and social thinking skills
- 2.2.5 Learn and utilize strategies to handle peer pressure and make healthy choices.

Measures

- Implementation of TES Respect Rubric, as noted on Progress Reports
- Assessment of school climate
- Feedback from parents and students

Objective 2.3 Support and encourage healthy living habits to promote lifelong wellness in students.

TES will promote a school climate that supports life-long healthy living habits. One way to achieve this is by having readily available healthful foods and a wide range of physical activities. We will also promote habits that limit transmission of communicable diseases.

Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Select foods for a balanced diet
- Practice habits which limit transmission of communicable diseases
- Participate in a wide range of physical activities

Strategies

- 2.3.1 Give students easy access to healthful choices (i.e., fresh foods, opportunities for exercise, etc.)
- 2.3.2 Make learning about healthful choices experiential and part of our school culture
- 2.3.3 Continue to utilize the school garden to teach and produce healthful school food

Measures

- Results of Health Office data activity, school garden production level

Objective 2.4 Implement a model of psychological and behavioral services that supports the emotional well-being of all students.

TES will support all students' psychological well-being to enhance their development. All students shall therefore participate in classroom guidance and teaching sessions that support healthy emotional growth and development.

Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Access academic and social learning opportunities that support their psychological and emotional well-being
- Participate in classroom guidance and teaching sessions that support healthy emotional growth and development

Strategies

- 2.4.1 Teaching staff and supportive services teams will communicate with each other as appropriate

2.4.2 Staff shall continue to participate in professional development in “best practices” and interventions that support psychological and behavioral development

2.4.3 Behavioral and psychological specialists shall work collaboratively with school guidance counselor, faculty members, and parents.

Measures

- Anecdotal classroom notes and observations together with parental input and assessment

Goal 3 TES will have the necessary support structures and educational expertise.

The Thetford Town District School Board recognizes that competent, transparent financial management and a sustainable governance structure are critical to the school’s long-term welfare. In addition, the school board seeks to provide resources that optimize students’ learning environment, including up-to-date computers and other technology, appropriately-sized classes and connections with individuals and institutions outside of the school.

Objective 3.1 Obtain competent and transparent financial management.

The School Board will continue to take steps to ensure that TES finances are transparent and responsibly managed.

Outcomes

The School Board and Principal will be able to:

- Access reliable, timely trial balances
- Make budget decisions based on accurate, timely, comprehensive information
- Have sufficient depth of understanding of the annual school budget to communicate effectively with the Thetford community

Strategies

3.1.1 Secure assistance of accounting professionals with Vermont public education accounting expertise who will provide regular and accurate financial information and provide guidance on how best to make and manage the budget for TES

3.1.2 Establish a formal process of internal controls, including segregation of duties for the authorization of financial transactions, custody of assets and record keeping

- 3.1.3 Continue to contract for an annual audit to be available, at least in draft form, by December of each year
- 3.1.4 Train all board members in interpreting budget information, by means of a yearly training session and distribution of informational materials.

Measures

- A comprehensive, up-to-date automated system that is accessible to TES administration and the school treasurer
- Timeliness and accuracy of budget information
 - Timeliness and accuracy of tax information
 - Results of annual audit

Objective 3.2 Adopt a sustainable governance structure that protects the long-term welfare of the school and maintains local authority over its operation.

TES thrives as a high-performing small school with strong community involvement and support. In response to Vermont's current push to consolidate schools and school boards, the Thetford District School Board will seek ways to protect and enhance the community's control of its school.

Outcome

The School Board will be well positioned to adopt the best governance option

Strategies

- 3.2.1 Complete a board-level review of governance options
- 3.2.2 Identify criteria for optimal governance structure based on board, staff and community input
- 3.2.3 Select the best realistic option for TES based on these criteria, and implement a process to pursue that option

Measures

- Establishment of new governance structure or determination that the current governance configuration is optimal
- Timeliness and quality of governance review initiative
- Timeliness and viability of implementation strategy

Objective 3.3 Provide sustainable technology infrastructure for all grade levels.

Technological literacy is essential for today's society. TES will provide a technology-rich learning environment for all grade levels.

Outcome

TES staff and students will be provided with an up-to-date supply of computers and related equipment, together with the training necessary for their use.

Strategies

- 3.3.1 Implement a computer equipment leasing arrangement
- 3.3.2 Establish sustainable technology budgeting in the TES budget

Measures

- Timeliness, sufficiency, and affordability of equipment leasing agreements
- Timeliness and clarity of technology budget

Objective 3.4 Implement a Recruiting Program

TES welcomes the enrollment of out-of-town students and the participation of their families in the school community. The School Board will develop a recruitment program to promote the school in surrounding communities.

Outcomes

TES will attract tuition-paying out-of-town students

Strategies

- 3.4.1 Identify optimal grade and class sizes
- 3.4.2 Develop recruitment practices and materials to attract students from beyond Thetford
- 3.4.3 Establish a respectful and transparent process for prospective students to apply to TES

Measures

- Increased numbers of tuition-paying students from beyond Thetford
- Regional recognition of TES as a desirable elementary school for tuition-paying students from beyond Thetford

Objective 3.5 Cultivate a "school without walls" that leverages resources in the Thetford community and surrounding communities for the benefit of TES students

TES benefits from its location in a supportive, talented community, and in a region that boasts a variety of cultural, academic and natural resources. TES will continue to seek opportunities to collaborate with individuals and institutions, in Thetford and in surrounding communities, for the purposes of sharing resources and enhancing students' educational opportunities.

Outcomes

TES will be able to:

- Recognize and act on opportunities to collaborate with institutional partners
- Enjoy diverse, positive relationships with Thetford community members
- Expose TES students to the rich cultural, academic and environmental resources of the Upper Valley region

Strategies

- 3.5.1 Meet with the Thetford Selectboard and Thetford Academy Trustees periodically to identify opportunities for collaboration
- 3.5.2 Establish relationships with board members and administrators of schools in nearby communities and pursue collaborative opportunities to reduce costs and provide benefits for students
- 3.5.3 Create, maintain, and make easily accessible to TES educators a database of volunteers who are available to support school activities
- 3.5.4 Create opportunities to acknowledge and promote volunteers
- 3.5.5 Fund and otherwise encourage enrichment opportunities that provide students with greater access to resources in the Upper Valley region

Measures

- Number and results of collaborative agreements
- Extent of volunteer support for school activities

Objective 3.6 Maintain and Enhance School Website

As the Thetford community has become increasingly reliant on electronic communication, the importance of the TES website has increased. The site is an important tool for communication with parents, and also for recruitment of both new staff and students. The School Board seeks to expand the extent of board-related information on the site, and provide sufficient resources for future graphic enhancement and other improvements.

Outcomes

The School Board, TES and the Thetford community will be able to:

- Use the website to communicate in a timely and effective way with parents, staff and the TES community

- Access comprehensive School Board materials on the website
- Use the website as an effective tool for staff and student recruitment

Strategies

- 3.6.1 Identify documents and other information that should be on the website, and establish processes for providing and updating this information
- 3.6.2 With community and staff input, identify aspects of the website that merit improvement
- 3.6.3 Provide resources for website improvements

Measures

- Timeliness and accuracy of information about School Board activities on website
- Utility and attractiveness of website
- Parent, staff and community member satisfaction with the website as a communication tool