



The School District of Philadelphia  
**Operations Department**  
**Strategic Plan**  
*May 2020*



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# Letter from the Superintendent

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Every child in Philadelphia has the right to an excellent public education in a safe, healthy, and welcoming facility. The School District of Philadelphia recognizes that strong operational systems are necessary to create these conditions for learning. The following Operations Department Strategic Plan was developed to elevate the Operations Department and ensure that it receives the needed resources to provide excellent customer service to schools in the district. This plan charts the course for the School District of Philadelphia to support schools operationally and clarifies a set of priorities that will ensure all students in Philadelphia learn and grow in safe, welcoming environments.

For the next five years all Operations teams will pursue initiatives and actions that support the priority areas. This Strategic Plan will guide the district's Operations Department to continually improve the way that it supports students and schools. Using the Operations Department Strategic Plan as a guide, staff across the district will maintain a common understanding of how to create systems that support student learning.

We are excited to share this plan as a first step in the process of enhancing our operational systems district-wide.

In partnership,

Dr. William Hite

# Stakeholder Engagement

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Prior to writing this Operations Department Strategic Plan various district leaders, school staff, students, parents, and community members participated in focus groups, surveys and interviews to share their perspectives on how to strengthen and align the Operations Department's core mission with the needs of the various stakeholders that we serve and support on a daily basis. This plan also reflects insights from the operations-focused questions on the 2019 District-Wide Survey, which included feedback from over 87,000 students and 35,000 parents.

## Focus Group and Interview Participants:

- Operations and Finance District Leaders
- School Board Members
- School and District Staff
- Commonwealth Association of School Administrators
- Local SEIU 32BJ
- Philadelphia Federation of Teachers

## Steering Committee Members:

To aid in the development of our Strategic Plan, a Steering Committee of leaders from across the Operations Department was established. The members below were responsible for ensuring the plan was relevant to the district and the community.

Name	Team
Amelia Coleman Brown	Learning Network 11
Danielle Floyd	General Operations
Douglas Compton	Transportation
Eileen Lewis	Food Services
Jarred Lee	Food Services
Jim Creedon	Facilities Management and Capital Projects
Joseph Antonio	Superintendent's Office
Kyla Jones	Procurement
Larisa Shambaugh	Talent
Leigh Clark	Capital Projects
Ralph Carp	Facilities and Maintenance
Vern Palmer	Facilities and Maintenance

# Building the Operations Department Strategic Plan

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The School District of Philadelphia followed a multi-step approach to create the Operations Department Strategic Plan.

**January 2020:** Created 12-member Steering Committee to develop Strategic Plan (included leaders and staff from within the Operations Department).

## School and Community Feedback

**February 2020:** Gathered quantitative data provided by the district to identify areas of strength and improvement within the School District of Philadelphia's Operations Department.

## Draft Plan

**March 2020:** Solicited opinions and feedback from the Steering Committee on the draft plan.

## Finalize Plan

## Form Steering Committee

**February 2020:** Conducted interviews with district leaders, principals, district staff, and school board members, focused on their experience with the Operations Department in the School District of Philadelphia.

## Complete Needs Assessment

**March 2020:** Engaged in a multi-step process to draft the Theory of Action, Priorities, and Measurable Goals.

## Gather Feedback on Draft

**April 2020:** Incorporated feedback and edits into a finalized Strategic Plan.

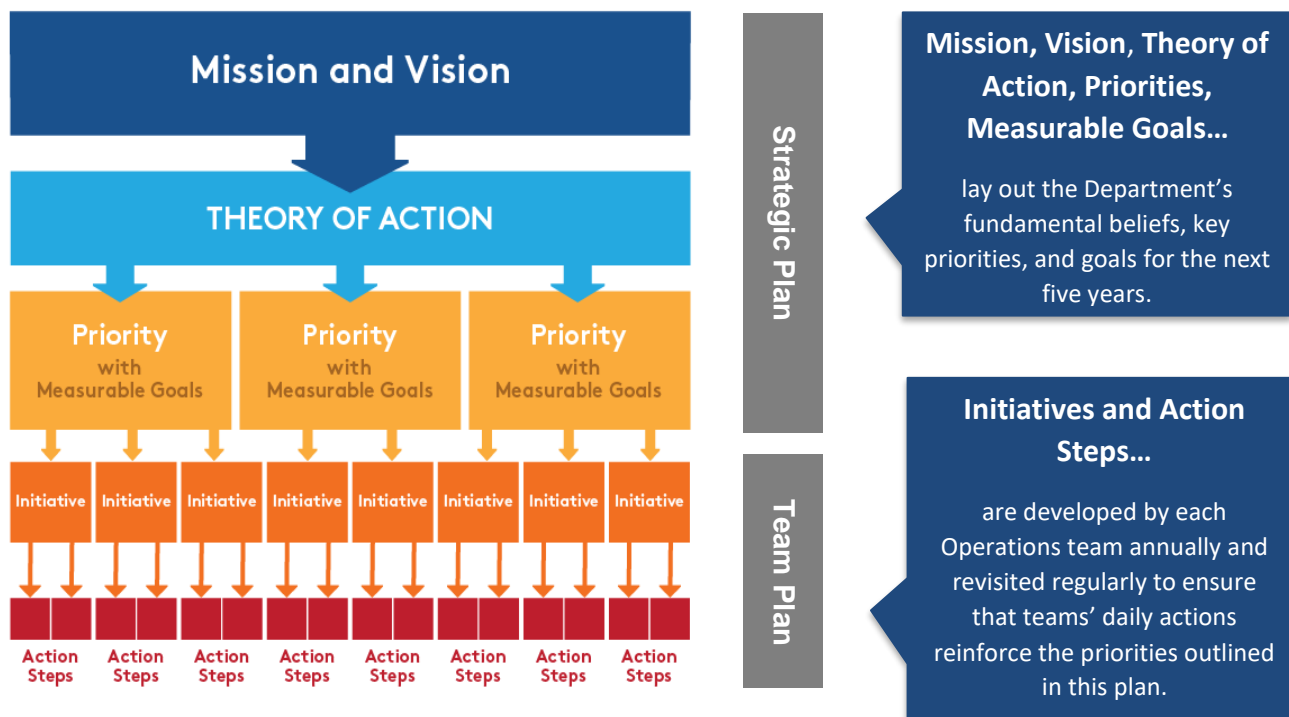
# Implementing the Strategic Plan

This Strategic Plan will guide how Operations teams focus their efforts over the next five years. Each Operations team will use the Strategic Plan to identify and implement initiatives under each priority area. Teams will also identify action steps to drive their initiatives forward. Each Operations team will be responsible for building upon the priorities and goals outlined in this plan. Operations teams will ensure that the plan is translated into actionable, concrete steps that improve performance.

The initiatives and action steps that teams develop from this plan will be revisited annually based on the progress made towards the goals. However, the priorities outlined in the Strategic Plan will remain consistent to guide teams' efforts.

As this plan is implemented over the next five years, Operations Department leaders will monitor progress against its goals and communicate results to district leaders, schools, and community stakeholders. As progress is made, leaders will work with teams to adapt their efforts to deepen support for the plan's priorities.

## Framework for Strategic Plan Implementation





# Operations Department

## Mission, Vision, and Theory of Action

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The School District of Philadelphia's Operations Department Strategic Plan is nested within District-Wide Strategic Priority 4. The Operations Department Mission and Vision are statements of the Department's long-term aspirations.

### **District-Wide Strategic Priority 4** (*Action Plan 4.0*)<sup>1</sup>

Ensure central and school-based operations are responsive, efficient, effective, and student-centered.

### **Operations Department Mission**

We will provide exceptional customer service and deliver strong school facing support to students, faculty, administrators, district colleagues and the school community who are our customers. We want children and teachers to look forward to working and learning in our buildings, eating in our cafeterias, playing in our yards and traveling safely to and from school.

### **Operations Department Vision**

We will deliver on the right of every child in Philadelphia to an excellent public school education in a safe, healthy, and welcoming facility. We will raise the standard for school facilities and ensure that every school is well maintained, clean and in good repair. We will provide all students and teachers with environments that are conducive to learning. We want children and teachers to look forward to working and learning in our buildings, eating in our cafeterias and traveling safely to and from school. The physical environment, food quality and transportation services at all of our schools will become a beacon of pride for the children, teachers and administrators in our schools.



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<sup>1</sup> The School District of Philadelphia's Action Plan 4.0 is in development as of April 2020.

## Operations Department Theory of Action

We recognize that Operations is a core function in the School District of Philadelphia, and that the Department creates conditions for learning. The School District of Philadelphia's Operations Department Theory of Action reflects our core beliefs about what will lead to the long-term success of our students, families, communities, and staff.

### IF WE...

maintain a coordinated operational system grounded in leadership, explicit goals, accountability, high standards of customer service and regular stakeholder engagement, structures to support team development, and we value our staff...

### THEN WE CAN...

provide ALL students in the School District of Philadelphia with the necessary structures to focus on learning by...

1. **Providing clean, safe, welcoming** facilities,
2. **Giving students healthy and nutritious meals,**
3. **Transporting students** safely and promptly,
4. **Supporting the timely acquisition of goods** and services,
5. **Creating and maintaining plans** for the long-term sustainability of our buildings,

### IN ORDER TO...

lay the foundation to provide a high-quality education that prepares, ensures, and empowers all students to achieve their full intellectual and social potential to become lifelong learners and productive members of society.





# Operations Department Priorities

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Using the Operations Department Theory of Action as a guide, the School District of Philadelphia identified four priority areas to direct our efforts, address and reduce challenges, and guide our district to allocate Operations resources purposefully. Over the next five years, Operations teams will use these priorities to guide their efforts and prioritize initiatives. Teams will monitor progress against the goals in this plan to understand how their work is supporting the following four priorities.

## **Priority 1: Systems for Proactive Planning and Coordinated Action**

The Operations Department is a cohesive and coordinated team that works together, shares information openly, and sets common goals.

## **Priority 2: Human Capital Management**

The Operations Department recruits and retains high-quality talent and recognizes employees' strong performance.

## **Priority 3: Timely, Quality Customer Service**

The Operations Department provides schools with high-quality, timely service that solves problems and enables schools to focus on learning.

## **Priority 4: Continuous, Data-Driven Improvement**

The Operations Department develops and regularly tracks progress towards ambitious team goals that support student learning.



## **Priority 1: Systems for Proactive Planning and Coordinated Action**

### **What is our priority?**

**The Operations Department is a cohesive and coordinated team that works together, shares information openly, and sets common goals.**

### **How will we achieve our priority?**

We will maintain regular coordination across teams so that all Operations teams have visibility into how their work intersects. We will develop and implement strategic, proactive plans that allow staff to manage their daily operations while also addressing issues that arise. And we will create guidelines for roles and succession plans so that when individuals take on new responsibilities, they have guidance, support, and knowledge to do so.



### **How will we know if we're successful over the next five years?**

- By August of 2020, every team in Operations will develop and maintain its own multi-year plan that includes Key Performance Indicators<sup>2</sup> and milestones and will monitor progress against the plan quarterly.
- Beginning in August of 2020, Executive Directors in the Operations Department will convene monthly to review new and ongoing initiatives within each team and identify the specific implications of each initiative on other Operations teams.
- The Operations Department will meet on a monthly basis to identify and address the district's most pressing operational challenges as a cross-functional team.

### **What does this mean for students, schools, and our community?**

School staff, students, and families will experience the Operations Department working together to solve operational problems promptly and completely. Day-to-day operational support to schools will improve as measured by the annual survey.

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<sup>2</sup> The things that a team will be able to see to know its work is effective.

## **Priority 2: Human Capital Management**

### **What is our priority?**

**The Operations Department recruits and retains high-quality talent and recognizes employees' strong performance.**

### **How will we achieve our priority?**



We will collaborate with the Talent Department to create a successful pipeline for recruiting, hiring, and retaining high-quality candidates that represent Philadelphia's community whenever possible. We will fill vacancies as promptly as possible, focusing on prioritized roles, as identified by the Department. In addition, we will reflect SDP's mission as a learning organization by developing staff skillsets and capabilities. Finally, we will offer staff opportunities for development and growth within SDP and ensure employees feel recognized for positive contributions to the organization.

### **How will we know if we're successful over the next five years?**

- By June of 2020, the Operations Department will collaborate with the Talent Department to develop and maintain a database that includes a count of all positions within the Department, vacancies, and prioritization for hiring.
- By August of 2020, each team in the Operations Department will develop and maintain internal mechanisms to recognize and celebrate strong employee performance and will collaborate with Talent to develop longer-term systems to provide constructive feedback to staff in the future.
- The Operations Department will post 100% of vacancies within 14 days of being notified of the vacancy, fill 100% of its high priority vacancies within 90 days of posting the vacancy, and fill 75% of its lower priority vacancies within 120 days of posting the vacancy.
- The Operations Department will quarterly evaluate and adjust posting or recruitment efforts for all vacancies unfilled for more than 6 months.

### **What does this mean for students, schools, and our community?**

Schools see Operations staff take pride in their work because it supports student learning. Stakeholders are confident that Operations staff will adapt the way they work to better support schools and the community if they receive constructive feedback. Schools experience high quality and consistent services from Operations staff.

## **Priority 3: Timely, Quality Customer Service**

### **What is our priority?**

**The Operations Department provides schools with high-quality, timely service that solves problems and enables schools to focus on learning.**

### **How will we achieve our priority?**

We will establish a culture of high-quality customer service that quickly resolves operational issues at schools or, where the solution is less clear, develop and commit to a plan to resolve the concern. We will collaborate with the Office of Communications to ensure professional, two-way communication with stakeholders regarding major initiatives. When issues are reported, we will respond in a timely manner, and maintain clear communication through resolution. We share clear and relevant information about our performance to stakeholders, including schools, principals, and parents.



### **How will we know if we're successful over the next five years?**

- By August 2020, the Operations Department will establish targeted “customer satisfaction” questions for all teams.
- By June 2021, 75% or more of survey respondents from each surveyed group, including principals, students, and teachers, will agree that they received high quality service on the core customer satisfaction question for each team.
- By January 2021, the Operations Department will acknowledge receipt of 100% of school requests for services within 24 hours of receiving the request.
- By January 2021, the Operations Department will fully resolve 75% of principal and school requests for services within 48 hours or develop a solution and timeline to address the issue.

### **What does this mean for students, schools, and our community?**

Schools know their requests for operational support will be responded to promptly. Schools do not have to make repeated requests for help in the same area. Schools, students, and families receive communication about operations clearly and openly.



## **Priority 4: Continuous, Data-Driven Improvement**

### **What is our priority?**

**The Operations Department develops and regularly tracks progress towards ambitious team goals that support student learning.**

### **How will we achieve our priority?**



We will improve the usability of data by identifying critical data points for each team and ensuring data is accurate, accessible, and understandable to teams. We will use data to inform decision-making and drive better performance. We will set regular, ambitious goals to identify gaps, course correct, and measure our performance based on those goals. And finally, we will monitor these measures to improve performance, celebrate successes, and enhance mutual accountability.

### **How will we know if we're successful over the next five years?**

- By January of 2021, Executive Directors will facilitate quarterly Progress Monitoring meetings during which the team (1) reviews progress against KPIs, (2) celebrates success, (3) identifies 2-3 KPIs in need of intervention due to underperformance and develops an action plan for improvement.
- By September of each fiscal year, the Operations Department will have “cleaned” all Operations data systems such that parties agree information is up-to-date and accurate, and that cleanliness is maintained moving forward.
- By August of each fiscal year, 95% of district Operations staff and 80% of school-based Operations staff will be able to identify the specific metrics their team uses to track performance.

### **What does this mean for students, schools, and our community?**

Schools know the Operations Department has accurate and up-to-date data on service requests and facility conditions. Schools see operational supports improve over time.



## Next Steps – Implementation

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Beginning immediately and continuing over the next five years, Operations teams will develop individual initiatives and action steps based on this Strategic Plan. To create structures that will enable the Operations Department to implement this plan, the School District of Philadelphia will:

- ✓ Designate an executive leader to serve as the sponsor for the Operations Department Strategic Plan's implementation
- ✓ Reorganize the Operations Department to better align to the Strategic Plan and oversee its day-to-day execution
- ✓ Assign a project manager for the Strategic Plan whose responsibilities include communicating to stakeholders and gathering information needed to monitor plan implementation
- ✓ Convene district leaders on a regular basis to review progress towards the plan's measurable goals
- ✓ Evaluate and allocate the resources needed to achieve the measurable goals within the plan
- ✓ Provide the Operations teams with periodic protected time to develop and monitor team specific initiatives and action steps aligned with the plan's priorities

*Given district and school closures in the spring of 2020, the timeline for some goals may be extended. Teams should continue to monitor progress towards the goals included in this plan based on the specified timelines. If adequate progress is not made against the goals within the specified timeline, team and Operations Department leaders should mutually agree upon an extended timeline for goal attainment.*