

THE PALMDALE

PROMISE



La PROMESA de Palmdale

A Strategic Plan to Ensure Future Success

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Palmdale School District  
Raúl Maldonado, Superintendent

## Our Journey to PROMISE

In October 2014, the Palmdale School District and Board began conversations about the need for a district strategic plan that would set the direction for the district and that would put student achievement front and center. By December 2014, the decision had been made to engage with a strategic plan consultant to guide the district and its stakeholders in the design of such a plan. Central to this was a commitment to utilize a process that engaged stakeholders deeply. By January 2015, the planning was in full swing, and the resulting journey reflects these initial considerations.

Our stakeholder engagement process has involved several layers. We established a formal broad stakeholder group, with whom we met four times, beginning with a full day orientation, followed by three two and a half hour meetings. This group helped us refine our district essentials and begin the recommendation development process. We also held four community forums to provide an orientation to the Palmdale PROMISE and the accomplishments to date, and to solicit input to some essential questions. We held five student focus groups, including one with high school aged graduates of Palmdale to solicit their input about what would make Palmdale schools the best in the world. We also conducted a number of interviews with key staff and designed a districtwide survey for students, staff, and parents. Additionally, we held informational meetings with key community advocates and the two employee organizations, PETA, and CSEA, and we conducted ambassador training for our site administrators and our parent liaisons. We also launched a strategic plan page on the district website where a wide array of information and documents are available to the general public.

The Palmdale School District has many assets upon which to build its future successes. With a superintendent committed to the high achievement of all students and the nurturing of a respectful and collaborative district culture, the District is poised to experience transformational changes. Already, staff and community have consistently expressed a noticeable shift for the good in relationships and expectations. Staff and community both express their appreciation for the openness and transparency with which the superintendent operates.

Also notable is the focus on students. This includes support for robust instructional programs, professional development, and parent education. Issues of alignment are being discussed as a way of strengthening results. There is palpable energy and enthusiasm about what is possible. Students themselves are taking up a much more visible role in determining their own futures and in voicing their perspectives. Teachers, administrators, and support staff are thinking deeply about their roles and responsibilities in this new era. The idea of what constitutes powerful education is being re-envisioned, and multilingual learning opportunities, the arts, technology, and much more are now being surfaced as essential to a well-rounded education for global competitiveness.



Community relationships and partnerships are growing, and the city infrastructure is working hand-in-hand with the district to support students and families. The idea of Palmdale emerging as a national model of excellence is empowering and provocative. There are conversations taking place about what it would take to make that a reality. There is a burgeoning passion around making Palmdale schools the best in the world.

## Our Opportunities

The time is right for us to move forward. Our students need for us to provide them with a 21<sup>st</sup> century education, and this plan will guide our efforts to prepare Palmdale students to become global citizens. Our students are not limited by the boundaries of their neighborhoods. They live in a global world that requires high levels of competency in multiple languages, as well as the language of technology, in order to be able to navigate it with ease and to develop deeper understanding of the world's economic, social, and political issues.

We need to be able to prepare them for that world. We need to be able to walk our talk and live our values. And on a more practical level, our current strategic plan expires in June of this year, and we need to have a new plan in place before then.

## The Palmdale PROMISE: What's in a Name?

When a group of community advocates met early in February 2015, they reflected in small groups on what we should name our new strategic plan. We asked them: What sort of name resonates with you? What would communicate the most powerful message about this plan? What name would be most likely to engage the broadest sector of our community? Then, we took the results of the small group work and voted on our best choice for a name. We identified our top choice, and from that, our final name emerged.

The group wanted a name that was accessible to both English and Spanish speaking members of our community, and thus The Palmdale PROMISE/ La PROMESA de Palmdale. Both the English and Spanish subtitles form the acronym PROMISE:

**Pursuing Remarkable Opportunities to Marshal  
Innovation, Inspiration, and Imagination for Success & Engagement**

**Promoviendo y Realizando Oportunidades Magníficas  
de Innovación, Inspiración, e Imagenación para un Sobresaliente Exito**



As part of our strategic plan name, we say that through implementation of the new plan, we are making a promise to our students and our community. We are using the positive associations that exist with PROMISE and PROMESA to communicate something vital about our strategic plan: that we commit to providing resources and support in order to build our students’ capacities, and that our commitment will yield positive outcomes for our students and our communities, much in the same way that when we give our word and keep it, we enjoy the results of being honorable and demonstrating integrity. This is a metaphor in action.



## Our District Essentials

Our strategic plan represents our new leadership strategy for dramatically improving educational outcomes for Palmdale’s students. To make this understandable to the broader community, a good strategic plan tells a story about the organization --- where it’s headed and how it plans to get there. An important part of telling that story is helping our constituents understand who we are as a district. What’s our identity? We call this core set of descriptors our District Essentials. They include our values and beliefs, our vision/mission/definition of student success, our theory of action, our design principles, our strategic goals, and our instructional priorities.

### VALUES & BELIEFS

After reviewing the current values in the context of today’s realities and a globalized 21<sup>st</sup> century environment, Palmdale School District has adopted a new set of five values that incorporate most of the current beliefs, sharpening and focusing them:

- HIGH INTELLECTUAL PERFORMANCE that prepares every student to graduate ready for college, career, and the global 21st century world.
- EQUITY for all our students, schools, and communities as reflected in outcomes and opportunities.
- Facilitating and supporting every student’s achievement by BUILDING ON THEIR STRENGTHS, CULTURES, LANGUAGES, and experiences to create new successes.
- MULTILINGUALISM and MULTICULTURALISM as individual, community, national, and global assets in the 21st century.
- INTEGRITY AND COMMUNITY based on trust and common purpose that empower individuals and communities.

### VISION/MISSION & DEFINITION OF STUDENT SUCCESS

#### *Vision*

Palmdale will become a district where . . . Every Student Leaves Ready for Success in High School and Beyond:  
College, Career, the Global World.

#### *Mission*

The mission of the Palmdale School District is to implement our vision with actions and services targeted to students, parents, and staff so our students can live their lives to their full potential.



### *Definition of Student Success*

What does it mean to be ready for college, career, and the global world? It means that not only will Palmdale students enter high school prepared to follow a path to eligibility<sup>1</sup> for California’s colleges and universities, they will have self-confidence and initiative, and they will also demonstrate the following skills, dispositions, and capacities<sup>2</sup> that are required for success in today’s global economy and environment:

- High-Level Academic Preparation
- College and Career Readiness
- Mastery of Advanced Literacies and 3M Skills (Multimedia, Multilingual, and Multicultural)
- Innovation, Creativity, and Solution Seeking Competencies
- Social, Civic, and Environmental Responsibility
- Technological Fluency
- Strength of Body, Mind, and Character

Because of the education and interactions our students experience in our schools, they will be prepared to live to their fullest potential in their lives beyond high school.

### **THEORY OF ACTION**

How can we translate our intentions into actions that yield the results we say we want? A good theory of action helps us ensure an accurate translation. Palmdale’s theory of action states that:

IF WE COMMIT TO A VISION OF STUDENT SUCCESS that has at its center engaged and achieving students prepared for success in high school and beyond: college, career, and the global world .  
..

AND IF WE ARE RELENTLESS IN CLARIFYING AND SUPPORTING CLASSROOM LEADERSHIP focused on improving the quality of classroom instruction and interactions and the use essential pedagogical practices so that all students achieve high intellectual performance and global competitiveness . . .

AND IF WE BUILD AND SUPPORT SCHOOL LEADERSHIP that provides instructional clarity and coherence for optimal learning through effective principals, leaders, and teachers, caring staff, and engaged families and community . . .

---

<sup>1</sup> Eligibility requirements for the University of California and the California State University system can be found at <http://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/counselors/files/csu-uc-a-g-comparison-matrix.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Based on a prior review by Francisca Sánchez of the extant literature and research on 21<sup>st</sup> century preparedness. See Appendix 3 for more details.



AND IF WE ORGANIZE DISTRICT LEADERSHIP around our core values and instructional priorities to provide our schools with the resources and conditions they need to do what we are asking them to do for our students’ success (responsive professional development, positive and trusting relationships, and mutual accountability). . .

AND IF WE ENGAGE OUR FAMILIES AND COMMUNITY in active support of our core values, vision, and instructional priorities to powerfully support our students, schools, and district so we are able to achieve our vision for student success . . .

THEN WE WILL BECOME A DISTRICT OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE AND EQUITABLE SCHOOLS that fully engage all students in powerful learning to succeed in school and beyond, defying the predictability of demographics, and that prepare all students as high achieving and creative, multilingual, responsible, and successful 21<sup>st</sup> century citizens who will live their lives to their fullest potential.

## **DESIGN PRINCIPLES**

Our design or operational principles define how we design and implement our Strategic Plan and its priorities, how we make decisions, and how we deal with negative patterns of thought and behavior that are barriers and obstacles to successful implementation of the Plan. To support Palmdale SD’s vision of student success, we have articulated a set of values-driven operational or design principles. These principles will serve as guidelines for the district’s work with its schools, communities, and partners:

### *Transparent Communication*

We model transparency through respect, listening, and purposeful communication.

### *Diversity*

We acknowledge and honor diversity and support responsiveness to students’ diverse strengths and needs with resources to ensure every student succeeds.

### *Commitment*

If we say we value an outcome, we place it as a priority and target resources to fully implement and accomplish it.

### *Positive Environment*

We provide a joyful and ethical workplace and educational setting that promote an affirming and safe environment, showing a high level of professionalism and customer service to all.



### *Progress Monitoring & Continuous Improvement*

We are active learners even as we seek to educate. We adjust our strategies and tactics as new data become available, constantly learning from our mistakes and successes. We use the Professional Learning Communities process and other quality improvement processes, to effectively monitor, evaluate, improve, or remove initiatives. We work collaboratively to produce exemplary outcomes for our Palmdale community.

### *Stakeholder Engagement*

To ensure the integrity of program implementation, we include affected stakeholders in the process by design.

### *Resource Alignment & Commitment*

To ensure high levels of student engagement and success, we align and prioritize adequate resources to support the adopted initiatives.

### *Focus on Student Success*

We affirmatively commit to our focus on the big picture of student success, as defined in our District Essentials, and to making the necessary, and sometimes difficult, decisions regarding priorities and resources to drive and sustain that success.

### *Passion, Commitment, & Empowerment*

We experience enthusiasm and encouragement as evidenced by our excitement and joy in what we do every day. Our behavior reflects pride, motivation, and empowerment through involvement. We are encouraged to act in the best interests of our students, staff, and community, as guided by our values, vision/mission, and theory of action.

### *Out of the Box Learning Experiences*

Learning requires risks. Mistakes are inevitable, but by staying focused, engaged, and accountable, we identify and avoid repeating our mistakes in the future, instead using them as opportunities for learning and growth.

## **STRATEGIC GOALS**

We have identified five strategic goals, which form the framework for powerful and sustainable district transformation. Recommended actions have been identified for each of these strategic goals. We will:

1. Dramatically improve student engagement and achievement through access to powerful learning opportunities.
2. Create and sustain globally-competitive learning environments of high intellectual performance across the curriculum and in all areas needed for 21st century success for students, including the opportunity for development of high levels of multilingual and STEAM competencies.
3. Provide strategic direction and support to district administrators, principals, teachers, and sites focused on improving the quality of classroom instruction and interaction in every classroom in every school.



4. Create and support safe, affirming, equitable, and enriched globally-competitive school environments for participatory, restorative, inclusive, and culturally and linguistically responsive learning and interaction for students.
5. Engage diverse families and communities in powerful learning and collaboration.

## **INSTRUCTIONAL PRIORITIES**

Our Instructional Priorities are reflected in these two key questions:

1. How do we create and sustain 21st century multilingual learning environments of high intellectual performance for students?
2. In the context of the Palmdale PROMISE, how do we make powerful learning (and the teaching that leads to powerful learning) public and visible to our entire Palmdale community?