

Visionary Overview

The Visionary Committee was a group of 30 community members, parents, and staff was created to review data in order to identify current strengths and weaknesses and provide strategies for solutions. The committee was charged with the objective of reviewing data, gathering input from experts and community stakeholders, and set a vision for 2020 and beyond.

During the Visionary Committee's meetings, the group identified priority strengths and weaknesses. Throughout the Visionary Committee's review process, an empty chair sat at the front of the room. This chair served as a constant reminder that the purpose of the school corporation is to act in the best interest of students. During the consensus building workshop, the committee members developed the visionary statement to set the vision of NLCS for 2020 and beyond.

Visionary Committee Statement

To best prepare our students, we must support our dedicated employees. In maintaining an effective student to teacher ratio, we will increase support for right-sizing our school corporation in an expedited manner. This will address that five out of ten of our elementary schools operate in deficit spending while acknowledging the size of the school district, population trends, and state funding formula. Our vision is to support a community that is sustainable, healthy, and viable.

A team of department leaders and support staff in NLCS developed the proposed plans based on the priorities of the Visionary Committee. During multiple work sessions, the team sought to maintain the strengths and improve on weaknesses developing plans based on the Visionary Committee's Statement. The following priorities were considered in the development of the three plans:

1. Increase student opportunities
2. Increase student supports
3. Ensure before and after school programs
4. Support the dedicated NLCS employees
5. Maintain an effective student to teacher ratio
6. Right-sizing the school corporation
7. Ensure financial stability
8. Develop an early learning center

Increase Student Opportunities

Through surveys of principals, a major weakness in the North Lawrence Community Schools is the lack of consistency amongst student opportunities. This includes instructional programs during the school day. The proposed solutions will provide more opportunities for students in elementary and middle schools. The district will be able to offer more equitable opportunities to all students in the district. For example, offering Science Technology Engineering Art and Math (STEAM) and Project Lead the Way programs to all students K-12.



Increase Student Supports

The North Lawrence Community Schools students have varying levels of needs. In the current district model elementary schools have a counselor available at varying levels. Some schools have additional teachers to support students who need additional instructional support and some do not. The two proposed solutions will ensure that each elementary school has a nurse, counselor, social worker, and other supports to meet their individualized needs. In addition, there is a need to develop a robust gifted education program in the district.

Ensure Before and After School Programs

Before and after school care is a support that can benefit students and parents throughout the district. This programming would allow parents to bring their children to school before the start time and pick them up after the school day has ended. Allowing parents to get to work on time after dropping their children off at school is a strength of the proposed solutions. During the before and after school programming, students can receive additional academic support or participate in club programs.

Support the Dedicated NLCS Employees

In a May 2019 survey of teachers, 68% indicated that they collaborate less than once a week. The two proposed models will increase supports to the employees of NLCS. For example, teachers will have access to instructional coaches at all levels. These teacher leaders will have the full time role of supporting the instructional improvement throughout the district. In addition, teachers will have larger collaboration teams. This means that teams of teachers at every grade level will be able to meet together to review data, create innovative lessons, and support each other in understanding standards and set learning goals.

Maintain Effective NLCS Student to Teacher Ratio

The Visionary Committee and NLCS district leadership believe that a core value of NLCS is effective student to teacher ratios. Currently the district's student to teacher ratio average ranges from 18 to 23 students per teacher. While there are some classrooms with a 14 to 1 ratio, combining the elementary schools will allow for a more consistent ratio throughout the district. Due to low numbers of students in buildings, NLCS currently have seven split classrooms. This means that some classrooms have two grade levels of students with one teacher. The proposed plans one and two have a 23:1 student to teacher ratio.

Right Sizing the School Corporation

The current model of NLCS is not able to meet the diverse needs of students and provide them with top notch resources. Right sizing the school corporation will allow for more funds to focus on meeting the needs of students and providing robust resources. In addition, fewer school buildings will provide teachers with the opportunity to collaborate regularly with colleagues to better support students.



Eliminate Deficit Spending

Currently, NLCS is operating in a deficit. This means that NLCS is and has been spending more than it is receiving from state tuition. Considering only facilities and salaries, 5 of the 10 elementary schools are spending more than state tuition is providing. Reducing the number of buildings to maintain will help the district save a considerable amount of money. The savings will not only bring the district into a balanced budget, but will also provide funds for increasing student and teacher supports.

Develop an Early Learning Center

According to the Indiana Department of Education, there are only four high quality education centers in Lawrence County. By transforming Stalker Elementary into an early learning center, NLCS will be able to provide preschool for students throughout the community. This will give students a jump start for kindergarten, which will have a lasting impact as students progress through K-12.

