

The School Board Members and I are embarking on a journey which will result in a three-year Strategic Plan for the school district. Just as businesses, large and small, have strategic plans, we need one in the education business. Our goal with our strategic plan is to match up to The Education Foundation's Connect Now process that the community has just been through. The year-and-a-half Connect Now process culminated in what we called a huge "congress" – a coming together of community members and leaders in April of this year. The resulting Connect Now Community Statement is a pretty good road map which will take us to where the community wants us to go. If you haven't had the chance to read it, we have it posted online on the home page of the district Web site (www.collierschools.com); just look under "What's New?" to find it. There you will also find updated information about our planning process posted on a regular basis, including invitations for you to attend meetings and to give us your feedback.

As we do our strategic planning we want to take advantage of what has already been learned because of Connect Now. One of the keys to the success of Connect Now was the community engagement piece. Input was received from every ethnic group, every racial group, and every socioeconomic group across Collier County. Our process will take seven or eight months to complete, and over that period of time there will be plenty of opportunity for you to offer input which will help shape the core statement we will end up with by January of next year. What will follow will be a few months worth of work on development of operational plans needed to organize the work of the Collier County Public Schools to keep it on track with our vision.

While we will be planning for three years of work as we go through this process, given our obvious resource constraints, we don't expect that we will be able to do everything we want to do in a three-year span. Our biggest challenge will be to narrow a strategic plan so that we focus on what we really need to focus on and then work to accomplish that. The beneficiaries in any case will be our students as everything we do is all about them.