



ames[™]
COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

How PK & Beyond[™] and the ACSD Strategic Plan align and compliment each other

October 5, 2026

Alignment to Mission and Beliefs

Mission

PK & Beyond™ operationalizes the mission of the Ames CSD by:

- ▶ Extending the mission of “empowering all students to pursue and maximize their personal and educational potential” beyond traditional classroom learning by giving students progressively more authentic opportunities to understand themselves, explore possibilities, develop skills, connect learning to the real world, and eventually participate in workplaces and postsecondary environments.
- ▶ Creating a seamless continuum of learning and experiences from awareness and exposure to application, experience, and creating pathways for student to transition to post high school. By emphasizing career connected learning, we are personalizing the education for all students.

Beliefs

PK & Beyond™ operationalizes the beliefs of the Ames CSD by:

Strategic Plan Belief statements	PK & Beyond™
All students are capable of learning, growing and succeeding.	PK & Beyond is structured so that every student has access to meaningful experiences that help them discover their capabilities and allows for this to be adaptable to students as they grow and learn.
Every student is unique and will be valued, supported and affirmed.	A broad network of employers, colleges, universities, and community organizations creates multiple pathways for students with different interests and strengths.
All students can thrive academically when high expectations are set, and opportunities and tailored resources are provided.	Work-based learning provides opportunities and authentic contexts in which students can apply academic knowledge. PK & Beyond can also be differentiated by age, interest, readiness, and career aspiration.

Beliefs continued

Strategic Plan Belief statements	PK & Beyond TM
A sense of belonging...is essential to learning	Relationships with employers, mentors, college faculty, university personnel, teachers, and community members can expand a student's network of trusted adults and help students see themselves as belonging in future educational and professional environments.
Strong community, school and family partnerships are essential to student academic success.	Strong partnerships that benefit every student is the heart of PK & Beyond TM
An evidence-based, data-driven decision making process is essential...	This allows the initiative to become part of the district's continuous-improvement infrastructure rather than simply an enrichment program.
Schools are dynamic and require ongoing creativity and innovation	Work-based learning is inherently an opportunity to innovate instructional practice by connecting classrooms with authentic problems, workplaces, technology, postsecondary institutions, and community resources.

Alignment to Objectives

Objective 1:

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Objective 1

Each student will benefit from a safe and vibrant environment that facilitates learning and promotes physical, mental, emotional, and social well-being.

PK & Beyond™ Connection:

PK & Beyond strongly aligns with Objective 1 by intentionally addressing students' sense of belonging, purpose, and confidence throughout their PK–12 journey. By redesigning the system around readiness rather than isolated electives, PK & Beyond creates a coherent, predictable learning experience that reduces anxiety and supports emotional safety. Students are guided from an early age to develop human skills such as communication, collaboration, perseverance, and adaptability—skills that are foundational to both social-emotional learning and long-term well-being. These skills are intentionally scaffolded in age-appropriate ways, from preschool conflict resolution to elementary self-expression and middle school identity development. By helping students understand how their skills connect to real-world contexts and future opportunities, PK & Beyond ensures that every student can confidently answer the question, “What’s next?” at graduation. This clarity of direction, combined with meaningful experiences and reflection on identity and purpose, fosters resilience, reduces uncertainty, and creates a learning environment where students feel safe, supported, and empowered to thrive both in school and beyond.

Objective 2

Objective 2

Each student will benefit from a consistent and viable curriculum, engaging instruction, and connected programs designed to ensure that everyone gets what they need to be successful.

PK & Beyond™ Connection:

PK & Beyond directly advances Objective 2 by creating a unified PK–12 instructional framework grounded in relevance, coherence, and real-world application. Rather than adding disconnected programs or electives, PK & Beyond establishes a clear progression of learning through three intentional phases: awareness in PK–5, exploration in grades 6–8, and authentic real-world experiences in grades 9–12. Foundational skills such as collaboration, communication, and perseverance are embedded early and developed in age-appropriate ways, ensuring instructional consistency across grade levels. Core academic subjects remain intact, but instruction is strengthened by demonstrating to students how math, social studies, and other content are applied in real-life settings—utilizing local business data, community issues, and civic engagement to increase relevance and engagement. Through co-designed experiences with community partners, aligned with standards and skills, students participate in meaningful learning activities, such as tours, job shadows, and project presentations, receiving authentic feedback. Together, these connected programs ensure instruction is engaging, curriculum is viable, and every student receives the support and experiences they need to be successful both in school and beyond.

Objective 3

Objective 3

Each student will benefit from a clear system in which academic, behavior, and social emotional needs are identified, skills are taught, and high expectations are met.

PK & Beyond aligns closely with Objective 3 by intentionally designing learning experiences that recognize and respond to the diverse strengths, interests, and developmental needs of all students. Beginning at age four, PK & Beyond builds foundational skills such as communication, collaboration, and perseverance in developmentally appropriate ways, creating a clear and consistent system for skill development over time. As students progress, the system adapts to their evolving needs, particularly during the middle school years when identity and purpose become central. Through relevant, real-world learning—including tours, job shadows, applied projects, and civic engagement—students see how their learning connects to their interests and future goals, reducing anxiety and increasing engagement. Instruction is designed to be flexible and responsive, using real-life applications of academic content to meet students where they are while maintaining high expectations. By offering multiple pathways, authentic feedback from community partners, and access to a broad range of postsecondary options, PK & Beyond ensures students' academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs are addressed within a unified system that prepares every learner for success beyond graduation.

Objective 4

Objective 4	Each student will benefit from effective communication and feedback with staff and the community.
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PK & Beyond™ Connection:

PK & Beyond aligns strongly with Objective 4 by embedding listening, collaboration, and continuous feedback into the design of learning experiences. The initiative was developed through intentional listening to business, industry, and community partners, and that same responsive approach continues through the co-design of projects created in partnership with them, rather than *for* them. Students benefit directly from this communication-rich environment by participating in authentic experiences where they present their work and receive meaningful feedback, reinforcing the value of clear communication and reflection. The use of an “experience transcript” further strengthens transparency and communication by capturing authentic learning, skills, and growth beyond traditional grades. By regularly gathering and acting on partner feedback, PK & Beyond ensures programs remain relevant, responsive, and aligned to community needs, creating a strong feedback loop between students, staff, and the broader community that supports continuous improvement and shared ownership of student success.

Objective 5

Objective 5

Each student will benefit from a variety of community partnerships that support their educational, career, and extracurricular pursuits.

PK & Beyond™ Connection:

PK & Beyond is intentionally built to advance Objective 5 by fully leveraging Ames's unique ecosystem of higher education, industry, nonprofit, and community partners. Grounded in a year of listening to businesses and community groups, PK & Beyond transforms partnerships from one-time engagements into a coordinated, districtwide system of support. Students benefit directly through tours, job shadows, co-designed projects, civic engagement experiences, and authentic feedback from employers, allowing learning to extend well beyond the classroom. Core instruction is strengthened through the use of local business data and real community issues, deepening relevance while reinforcing community connections. Structures such as the Collaborative Working Group and the long-term Business Academy hub provide a single entry point for partners, streamline communication, and expand access to high-quality pathways, dual credit, and certifications through DMACC and ISU. Together, these partnerships create meaningful, sustained engagement that supports students' academic growth, career readiness, sense of belonging, and long-term connection to the regional workforce—ensuring every student benefits from a community invested in their success.

Objective 6

Objective 6

Each student will benefit from a diverse staff who will engage in regular, high-quality professional learning and reflection.

PK & Beyond™ Connection:

PK & Beyond supports Objective 6—ensuring each student benefits from a diverse staff engaged in high-quality professional learning and reflection—by creating structures that position educators as designers, collaborators, and continuous learners within an authentic, real-world instructional system. Teachers are not asked to implement pre-packaged programs; instead, they co-create learning experiences alongside business, industry, and higher education partners, ensuring alignment to skills, standards, and student needs. This collaborative design process serves as a powerful professional learning experience, allowing staff to deepen their understanding of workforce expectations, instructional relevance, and interdisciplinary teaching. By providing a single, coordinated entry point for partnership through PK & Beyond structures, teachers are supported with streamlined communication and reduced initiative overload, increasing sustainability and job satisfaction. Over time, this approach strengthens staff retention and development by fostering professional growth, purpose, and connection to the broader community—while also contributing to a regional talent pipeline that benefits both educators and students, now and into the future.

Thank you for your support

BOARD DISCUSSION

Where do you see the strongest alignment between PK & Beyond and our Strategic Plan, and where should we continue to strengthen that connection?