



Creating a Strategic Plan for the Hillsdale Public Schools

Mission Statement

Dedicated to charting a course of success for today and tomorrow's children, the Hillsdale School District's mission is to empower all students with an exceptional educational foundation that actualizes their unique potential.

To provide an exceptional educational foundation, the Board, in active collaboration with the staff, the family and the community, and using a clear system of accountability, will provide the tools to ensure that our students and staff shall:

- 1. Work cooperatively in a safe, supportive and challenging learning environment that addresses individual learning needs;*
- 2. Apply problem-solving strategies and critical thinking skills learned through written, oral, technological and experiential application in and out of the classroom;*
- 3. Practice good citizenship by fostering respect for one's self and others through a better understanding of the needs of a diverse society;*
- 4. Fully integrate technology into the learning experience using creative and effective teaching techniques.*
- 5. Appreciate, preserve and promote the quality and professionalism of the staff, administration and Board of Education.*

Session 1 of 3 - What are the Strengths/Achievements and Challenges/Opportunities of the Hillsdale Public Schools?

On Wednesday, November 13, 2019 Hillsdale Public School District administrators, staff, Board members, parents, students and community members came together to initiate strategic planning. The first evening's topic focused on the Strengths/Achievements, and Challenges/Opportunities of the Hillsdale Public Schools. The meeting began with welcoming remarks by Shane Svorec, President of the Board of Education. Robert Lombardy, Superintendent, provided an informative overview of the district. Facilitators Matt Lee and Charlene Peterson from the New Jersey School Boards Association introduced the strategic planning methodology and assisted throughout the process.

More than 80 community, parent and staff participants gathered in 10 randomly assigned groups to identify the Strengths/Achievements and Challenges/Opportunities of the Hillsdale Public Schools through brainstorming and the sharing of ideas. After discussion, each group came to a consensus on its top 10 Strengths/Achievements and top 10 Challenges/Opportunities and presented those to the full group of meeting participants.

Hillsdale Public School Strategic Planning Meeting #1 Outcomes

The information that follows is a summary of the work of the small groups. All consensus points are recorded and posted on the district's website (<https://www.hillsdaleschools.com/>) to share the group work during the course of the strategic planning process.

Group Consensus: Strengths/Achievements & Challenges/Opportunities

“E” Group:

Strengths/Achievements	Challenges/Opportunities
Teachers / Administration	Old / outdated Middle School
Community involvement (town, local)	Lower elementary vs. Upper Elementary
	Safety - voting district at school while it is in session
	Limiting parent access in building
	Communication to families – less gray
	Parent involvement - low volunteers

Dark Blue Dot Group:

Strengths/Achievements	Challenges/Opportunities
Community	Building capacity
Technology	Synergy between schools and parent associations
Teachers	George White - dated building
Parent involvement opportunities	Fifth grade in Middle School
Our culture	4th grade departmentalization
	Disadvantage versus River Vale?

Yellow Dot Group:

Strengths/Achievements	Challenges/Opportunities
Strong communication, MFFA, Facebook, RemindApp, e-blasts	Facebook comments / groups
Dedicated staff	Streamline communication
Supportive parents	Website not user-friendly
Community	Kindergarten: Levels entering kindergarten (transitional program)
Culture	Drop-off procedure
Current on educational trends	Flex classrooms (similar to Park Ridge)
Supportive Administration	Classroom updating
MFFA / PTA / GFFA	Space at all schools / infrastructure
Passionate	Funding
Forward-thinking	Parent involvement
Social/emotional support	Shared goals / collaboration
Air conditioning in the schools	Education Foundation
Superintendent is visible and approachable	Clubs after school for elementary
	More arts programs

Hillsdale Public School Strategic Planning Meeting #1 Outcomes

No Dot Group:

Strengths/Achievements	Challenges/Opportunities
Motivated staff	Facilities upgrades: - space, - technology
Student achievement	Advanced use of Technology: - articulation from K-8 to 9-12 - professional development of new initiatives
Engaged parents	Schools to promote town / better link to community - increased use of social media
Technology access	Wellness for teachers
Class size	Parent Workshop: - Technology - curriculum
Professional development	
Social/emotional learning	
Extracurricular offerings	
Relationships with parent groups	
Retain staff	
Special education services	
Supportive administration / superintendent	

Light Blue Dot Group:

Strengths/Achievements	Challenges/Opportunities
Strong leadership	\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$ (Money)
Community	Facilities
Supportive teaching staff	Technology
Flexible in open teachers	Town partnership
Best practices	Student wellness/academic growth balance
Resources	Staff Wellness
Professional development time	Future recruitment of staff
Extracurriculars	Student enrollment
Diversity	Prepare students for future
Planning	Diversity
Kids!!!	
Technology	
Data collection	

Hillsdale Public School Strategic Planning Meeting #1 Outcomes

Green Dot Group:

Strengths/Achievements	Challenges/Opportunities
Dedicated staff / Administration	Facility constraints - especially at George White - lockers
Willingness to learn	Communication in George White for activities
Child-centered	Education Foundation for grants
Differentiated instruction	Less socialization for kids
Dedicated parents involved	Critical thinking issues due to overwhelming stress
	Special needs are growing - very demanding
	Answer complex questions with discussion
	Universal Design for Learning implementation
	Too digital

Orange Dot Group:

Strengths/Achievements	Challenges/Opportunities
Improved ergonomics	Balancing technology
One-to-one technology	Communication
Teacher quality	Updating infrastructure
Character education	Improving ergonomics across the board
Mindfulness program	Consistency with leadership

Black Dot Group:

Strengths/Achievements	Challenges/Opportunities
Staff of teachers and administration	Adjustment of communication between Elementary and Middle School - drop off
Wealth of communication alerts, portals	Trailing behind once they get to high school (Readiness)
Willingness to listen to concerns	Data accessibility
New Administration that show they care	Enrichment time
School counselors are involved and supportive	Security
Professional development opportunities	Aesthetics of building
Spirit of kids and programs having fun	Space limitations (rooms)
Support teachers	Social problems - Middle School
	Have more programs to help kids through social issues
	Diversity in administration
	Trailing with sports (recreation)

Hillsdale Public School Strategic Planning Meeting #1 Outcomes

Red Dot Group:

Strengths/Achievements	Challenges/Opportunities
Regional professional development	George White building
FFA / PTA	Bathrooms
Superintendent (transparency)	Aides
Communication	Differentiation
Forward-thinking	Lighting / safety

“F” Group:

Strengths/Achievements	Challenges/Opportunities
Teachers	Busing for extracurriculars
Principal / staff	Turf field
Passion / energy	Coding / robotics
Parents	After school programs for 5th grade
Student / teacher relationships	
Capacity	
New A.F. program at George White	
After school programs (but need more)	

The second strategic planning session is scheduled for:

Thursday, December 12, 2019 from 7:00 – 8:30 pm at the George G. White Cafetorium.

During the December 12 meeting, using a similar brainstorming process, we will identify our visions for the Hillsdale Public School five years from now.

The final meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 15 at 7:00 pm to write goal statements using the input from the two previous sessions.

Please join us. Everyone is welcome, and can fully participate, even if you were not able to attend the first meeting. We look forward to seeing you!