



Creating a Strategic Plan for the Mountainside School District

Mission Statement

The Mountainside Public School District is committed to academic excellence and providing an equitable, whole-child education for all K-8 students to ensure they are well-prepared for high school, and empowered with the knowledge, literacy, and social and emotional skills needed to be lifelong learners and shape the world around them. The District promotes a collaborative and supportive learning environment, infusing a comprehensive curriculum with 21st century skills that encourage communication and innovative, creative and critical thinking. It is our goal that all our students become informed, empathetic and productive citizens who are responsible on a personal, community and global level. The Board of Education, administration, and staff, working together with students, parents and the community, are accountable for achieving this vision.

Meeting# 3 Developing Strategic Planning Goals & Objectives

On June 3, 2024, Mountainside School District administrators, Board of Education members, staff, parents, and community members came together for Meeting #3 of the strategic planning process. The meeting began with a welcome and introduction by Board President, Vivian Pupo. Facilitators Patti Rees and Jeanne Cleary, from NJSBA, were introduced and provided an overview of the strategic planning process and the focus for the evening's activity.

The topic for the third meeting focused on developing goal statements and objectives for each of the three goal areas identified at the second meeting. Participants gathered in self-selected groups to work on the goal area of their choice. Participants were able to move from one goal area to another if desired.

Small groups were asked to identify a recorder to enter their consensus points into the provided Chromebook, and a spokesperson who would report their work to the larger group. The small groups reviewed the outcomes from meeting 1, Strengths & Challenges, and meeting 2, Vision and Initiatives, to identify strategies, group those strategies, develop objectives, and then develop an overarching goal statement for their goal area. Each group reported their work to the larger group.

The information that follows is a summary of the work of the small groups. As discussed with the meeting participants, all consensus points are recorded and posted on the district website to share the group work during the strategic planning process.

Strategic Planning Goals & Objectives

Goal #1: Parent/Guardian and Community Stakeholder Involvement

Goal Statement: Increase parent/guardian and community stakeholder involvement to enhance the student experience.

Objectives:

- Work collaboratively with the PTO to increase parent/guardian involvement and improve understanding of opportunities.
- Develop a survey to better understand parent resources (i.e. Passions, specialties, donating resources).
- Enhance social media education opportunities for both students and parents
- Increase senior/veteran (volunteer) involvement for engagement with students

Goal #2: Expanded Educational Opportunities to Support Student Achievement

Goal Statement: To increase educational opportunities that prepare our students as leaders for today and tomorrow.

Objectives:

- Global education - foster global awareness, diversity and inclusivity, through enhanced access to world languages and cultural competency.
- Technology - cultivate students' abilities to be active learners and how to self-monitor the appropriate use of technology in learning. Establish firm parameters for case use of technology so as not to remove it completely but teach them the proper way to incorporate technology to inspire their own thinking.
- Resources - Better leverage the resources we have in our community. Expand the ways in which we can maximize, reach and build sustainability in the community to strengthen civic engagement and environmental education for students.
- Enrichment - Enhance our enrichment offerings across the spectrum from G&T to special needs, making them more accessible to all.

Goal #3: Partnerships and Grants for Sustainability

Goal Statement: To generate and accelerate learning and growth opportunities for students and staff that serve present and future curricular needs and close any remaining post-Covid educational and fiscal gaps.

Objectives:

- Develop new and deepen existing partnerships with borough, county, state and federal organizations (including non-profits) to provide staff with professional development and enhance student learning opportunities in critical gap areas (e.g. science scores), as well as continue to enhance district strengths (e.g., theater, music, arts, sports). An example is the implementation of composting at K-8 of all food waste as a science and tech-focused curriculum-based initiative through hands-on experience composting.
- Conduct a complete district facilities audit (ideally within the next two years) to address building infrastructure, energy efficiency, classroom size, population growth and evolving education needs to ensure our learning spaces reflects the curriculum and student population of the next decade.
- Survey grades 9-12 needs of the community and continue to build on the historically strong relationship with BH/GLHS so that we are best preparing to meet needs of the community and all students. Examine and deepen subject-by-subject partnership with receive district that presses down from grade 8 to K so that Mountainside students enter the HS at or above peers in the receive district. Continue to harmonize the curriculum and reading list.
- Sustainability of staff - Provide opportunities that will both support existing staff from a retention perspective and help to recruit new educators. (1) Focus on mental health and well-being for teachers. Build programs to support staff so that they can better support their students. Close gaps on recognizing and supporting teacher and administrator mental health and wellbeing. Build a deeper and more qualified bench of substitute teachers. Implement staff surveys to gauge their feelings about their profession and quality of life. (2) Give teachers an opportunity to provide extra-curricular programs (e.g. the Gormley model) where they can meet the demand for after-school care (YMCA after-care is over-subscribed) and earn more income.

Next Steps

The next step in the process is the development of the action plans. The Superintendent and the Administrative team will develop the action plans for the Strategic Plan. The timelines will be developed for a 3–5-year plan.

The action plans will include:

- Major activities for each objective
- Who is responsible for the activity
- The resources to be deployed
- Due dates for completion
- Indicators of Success (how we will know the activity has been accomplished)

Thank you to everyone who has contributed their time, talent, and perspectives during any or all of the Strategic Planning meetings. We appreciate your participation and contributions!

Please watch the district website for final plan delivery to the Mountainside Board of Education. All will be invited to celebrate the final plan delivery.

Wishing you and your family a very healthy and happy summer!