

MOUNTAINSIDE
SCHOOL DISTRICT
STRATEGIC PLANNING

APRIL 8, 2024

Save the date for upcoming meetings on April 29th and June 3rd

District's Core Mission

- 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.

District's Core Beliefs

- Children are society's most valuable asset and every decision should be in their best interest.
- Schools should provide a safe, positive, and welcoming environment that emphasizes integrity, pride, acceptance, and mutual respect and will allow students to become responsible and caring adults.
- Schools must address the needs of the whole child in areas such as: social, emotional, physical, intellectual, and civic preparation.
- Schools should create a comprehensive curriculum incorporating creative and critical thinking, technology, communication, entrepreneurial, and problem-solving skills imperative to succeeding in a global society.
- Well-rounded academic and extracurricular experiences (athletics, fine arts, clubs) should be available and encouraged for all students.
- Faculty and staff members should be knowledgeable in their subject areas, with an emphasis on professional development and creative, innovative instructional methods to ensure all students achieve at their highest levels.
- When facing budgetary and economic issues, the district will find the best funding resources available to support its mission and to provide efficient, effective, and safe school facilities and infrastructure.
- An excellent school system is crucial to the economic development and vitality of the community.
- We must commit to continually improving communication and maintaining a strong relationship between the schools, residents, and the Mountainside community at large.

Review of Past Strategic Plan (2019-2024)

Long Range Goal #1:

To develop a system to continuously collect and monitor a variety of student achievement data in order to better target student learning needs, so that every student is provided with the support necessary to be challenged and succeed at their appropriate level.

How have we met this goal?

- Use of research based student data collection and benchmark programs such as LinkIt and iReady to measure student understanding in ELA, Math, and 5th-8th grade Science
- 1st - 8th grade students participate in benchmark assessments 3 times per year
 - Benchmark results are reviewed with staff through grade level and subject area meetings in order to determine targeted areas to support student growth
 - Data is used to identify students for participation in AIM and Gifted & Talented programs
- Staff utilizes other formative and summative assessment to measure student growth
- Achievement data is regularly shared with parents and guardians
- Staff professional development on achievement measures and targeted instruction

Review of Past Strategic Plan (2019-2024)

Long Range Goal #2:

To improve and sustain a plan for regular articulation between both Beechwood and Deerfield Schools, and the Mountainside and Berkeley Heights School District to ensure that all students are prepared to perform at their full potential when they enter Governor Livingston High School.

How have we met this goal?

- Mathematics
 - Shared committees worked together to develop a coordinated math curriculum in K-8
 - Mountainside transitioned to Algebra for all in 8th grade
 - Both districts researched, piloted, and purchased the Big Ideas math program for K-5
- Phonics/Word Study
 - A shared committee researched, piloted, and purchased the 95% phonics/word study program for grades K-5
- Cross District Articulation
 - Meeting opportunities between both buildings to ensure continuity of instruction and expectations
- Middle School
 - Cross articulation with Columbia and GL staff to align departmental programs
 - Staff training on Open SciEd program for science

Review of Past Strategic Plan (2019-2024)

Long Range Goal #3:

Facilitate the social and emotional well-being of all students, increase capacity for learning and handling challenges by cultivating a school culture based on communication, respect, inclusion, and empathy.

How have we met this goal?

- Purchase and implementation of district wide Social Emotional Learning program
- Building based positive reinforcement and awareness programs:
 - Beechwood CARES
 - Deerfield Helpful Huskies (3-5) and Husky Howl Outs (6-8)
- School based theme days and inclusive opportunities such as Start with Hello, Week of Respect activities, Beechwood CARES challenges, and many others
- Contracted services provided by outside agencies:
 - BCBA behavioral support services for IEP and 504 students
 - Tri-County Behavioral Care -- on site counseling and therapeutic supports
- Expanded family and community partnerships
 - Empathy focused assemblies and programs-- many supported by PTO and MEF
 - Parent workshops on various topics including school avoidance and student anxiety
 - Grief awareness training for staff by Imagine, through a Watts Foundation grant
 - Student Council donation drives, Salvation Army Angel Tree Drive, AHA Kids Heart Challenge, etc.
 - PTO and school Sensory Hour opportunities for students with special needs

Review of Past Strategic Plan (2019-2024)

Long Range Goal #4:

To insure that the district has a qualified and knowledgeable administration and faculty to support a comprehensive program that ensures that students' needs are met, and to facilitate long-range success.

How have we met this goal?

- In 2019, the administrative team was restructured to provide a full-time principal for Beechwood School.
- The district hired a full time Supervisor of Special Services to manage the special education department, the Child Study Team, and to oversee 504 services for students.
- We continue to explore ways to provide increased support across all curricular areas.
- Incorporated regularly scheduled grade/subject team meetings to review data, share best practices, and address student needs in real time.
- Continue providing professional development to strengthen individual and district growth
- Enhanced instructional delivery and learning opportunities. Examples included:
 - STEAM based related arts (HAMSTER) in grades K-2
 - Thinking Classroom, supported by a Watts Foundation Grant, in grades 5-8

Review of Past Strategic Plan (2019-2024)

Long Range Goal #5:

To provide students and faculty with a dynamic, state-of-the-art multimedia learning environment through continuous assessment and improvement of district technology infrastructure, equipment and systems.

How have we met this goal?

- Expanded 1:1 technology access to grades 1-8
 - Chromebook carts are provided to all grade 1-4 homerooms, and chromebook stations are available in Kindergarten classes
 - This year, students in grade 5 have the opportunity to to bring their devices home daily
- Increased use of Google Classroom to assist student ability to access instructional materials
- Expanded use of online platforms including iReady Personalized Pathways, Newsela, MathSpace, Securely, Genesis, & School Messenger for both education and communication
- Increased use of STEAM based activities general education classrooms, related arts, and after school programs. We continue to look for opportunities to expand in this area.
- Maintain and update all switches, wireless access points, etc. on a regular basis

2022-2023 Academic Snapshot

Student Data:

- 2022-2023 NJSLA Testing (Grades 3-8)
 - ELA -- Overall, 85% of our students met or exceeded expectations compared to a 51% average across the state
 - Math -- Overall, 77% of our students met or exceeded expectations compared to a 41% average across the state
 - Algebra I -- 77% met or exceeded expectations in this high school level course, compared to 35% average across the state
 - Science (Grades 5 & 8 only)
 - 5th grade -- 60% met or exceeded, compared to 27% across the state
 - 8th grade -- 46% met or exceeded, compared to 18% across the state
- 2022-2023 NJDOE School Performance summative percentile rank of 98.02% as compared to other similar schools across the state

Future Planning

Staffing:

- Expansion of Special Education programming to meet the needs of students within the district
 - For the 24/25 school year, we will add a new self-contained classroom for grades 3-5

With an approval of a separate proposal on the November ballot, which is needed due to the constraints of the current state and federal funding we receive, we would plan to:

- Reinstate instructional positions impacted by current budget restraints
- Reinstate successful instructional and mental health programs that are currently funded through expiring ARP grant funds such as FM Club, Reading Club, Tri-County Behavioral Health, and others
- Gifted & Talented / AIM Instruction - increase instruction for identified students with additional staff
- Curriculum Coordinator - add a part-time position to assist with curriculum development, instructional support, and professional development across all grade levels and subject areas.

Technology & Security:

- Maintain these areas and remain up to date with changing needs

Engaging Instructional Opportunities:

- Continue to identify innovative ways to engage students in meaningful and relevant learning

Strategic Planning 2024-2029

This is where you come in!

Brainstorm with others about new and innovative ideas to continue to improve and enhance the Mountainside School District.

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What is important to you and your family?

Where can we improve?

What successful programs would you like to see expanded?

**We look forward to your input and feedback!**