



Creating a Strategic Plan for the Bergenfield Public Schools

Mission Statement

The mission of the Bergenfield Public School District is to offer programs and services that enable all students to become self-directed, lifelong learners who are successful in college and the workplace while displaying a strong sense of citizenship. The district provides a safe and nurturing setting designed to prepare students with 21st century skills consistent with New Jersey Student Learning Standards. The Bergenfield Public School District fosters partnerships for the purpose of educational, operational, and fiscal responsibility.

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

On Wednesday January 13, 2021, Bergenfield 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 Bergenfield Public Schools. The meeting began with welcoming remarks by Dr. Christopher Tully, Superintendent, who provided an informative "state of the district" overview for participants. Facilitator Matt Lee from the New Jersey School Boards Association introduced the strategic planning methodology and assisted throughout the process.

More than 70 community, parent and staff participants gathered in 7 assigned groups to identify the Strengths/Achievements and Challenges/Opportunities of the Bergenfield 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 those were captured on a common document that was created in breakout rooms on the Zoom meeting platform.

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.bergenfield.org/domain/350>) to share the group work during the course of the strategic planning process.

Bergenfield Public Schools Strategic Planning Meeting #1 Outcomes

Group Consensus: Strengths/Achievements & Challenges/Opportunities

Group 1

Strengths/Achievements	Challenges/Opportunities
Teacher Apprentice Program (TAP) - Career Education	Tendency to believe one size fits all - something that works in one school doesn't necessarily work at another
How well administrators work together	Specials (music, etc.) doesn't start until 3rd grade - can they be implemented at K-2?
How well the teaching staff works together	How can the downtown shopping/entertainment/dining area be brought back? Something to attract people/youth back to town
Teachers do not feel micromanaged	More diversity in faculty/staff - especially at the elementary schools
Amount of resources available to students - in the classroom and virtually (Google Classroom, etc.) - students work at their own levels	More opportunities for ELL parents to be involved in their children's education
Strong sense of culture and diversity - stressing the importance of working together - highlighting culture in community and schools	No home economics, auto mechanics, or other vocational technology courses offered
Special education support system	Need more exploratory electives specifically at the middle school
Communication between teachers/administrators/parents	
Music department rocks!	
Alternative school faculty has established relationships with labor unions, technical schools, etc.	
Added courses such as robotics, Green Tech	
District Curriculum Committee	

Group 2

Strengths/Achievements	Challenges/Opportunities
Students care about respecting each other's rights to fairness	Need to bring back trades in high school, non-traditional offerings
Students have a good sense of civics, speak out for other's rights in class	Leverage the strengths of communication, consistency and coherence to map out a strong set of extracurricular programs next year to support students and families integrate back into a more traditional learning environment
Fully developed emergency management plan	Expand STEM programming PK-12
High level of college acceptances	Expand Gifted & Talented program offerings
Allow open enrollment in advanced courses	Increase participation of parents involving issues of mental health and HIB
High achievement in music and arts	Deploying security officers to the elementary schools
Diversity and openness, respect for all backgrounds	Expand our social-emotional/well-being support for students, teachers, and families
Challenging program offerings	Strengthen our education in drug abuse and alcoholism prevention

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Bergenfield has been thoughtful and consistent with communications and scheduling across elementary and middle schools.	Recognition of struggling students and ability to offer academic and well-being support, creative team set-up
Vertical alignment of curriculum has been streamlined in recent years	Transitioning back to post-virtual educational settings, "go back to the norm"
Supportive staff at every level	Strengthen curriculum with respect to civics (federal, state, local)- engage in upper middle school to interact with mayor and council
Partnerships with families- major strength during this time	Shared services agreement with board of education and municipality
Use of technology at all levels and across all curriculum areas	Improving sustainability and sustainability education at all grade levels
Ability to adapt to all learning formats	Advertise to increase attendance in Evening Instructional Support, continue for transition year
Evening Instructional Support	Space, especially in elementary schools, for increasing enrollment
Students' connections/buy-in to school culture/attentiveness in hybrid setting	Closing of St. John's school, provide recreation center at Conlon Hall, expand after school sports
All district security officers are certified and trained. District policy goes above and beyond state law	Bring back Big Brother/Big Sister Program (BHS students with elementary students)
BHS would be full anytime it's open, students love to be a part of the community, attend any events held, "second family"	PD for staff for supporting students as they come back to the building
	Expanding extended day opportunities, students craving sense of community, extra- and co-curriculars
	Potential absence of recreation sports, can we fill in potential gaps?
	Use of facilities in coordination with municipality to bring community together

Group 3

Strengths/Achievements	Challenges/Opportunities
Started the preschool program expansion grant. Great opportunity to get an early start for our students.	We would like to see an increase in PD opportunities for the teachers based on their feedback.
Offer a very comprehensive curriculum K-12. When students enter 3rd grade they get to explore their interests.	Inclusion - we would like to see students with special needs included more frequently district-wide with their general education peers.
Social Emotional Learning is a strength.	How do we bridge the work from January 2021 to September 2021 if we are back in-person? How will we address remedial needs of our students?
Bergenfield is a caring and welcoming learning environment. People care about each other.	There is a lack of diversity in our faculty and staff. We would like to see better representation for our diverse student population.
The cultural and social diversity of the district is a huge strength.	Training for faculty and staff in regards to equity, bias, microaggressions, and cultural competencies.
Financially the district is in the best position that it has been in a long time. There is no debt.	Offering more preschool classes.
Technology is a huge strength for the district. Specifically, the labs at the high school are state of the	Build infrastructure to sustain 1:1 laptop technology.

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art. This allows us to have mechanisms in place for students to move forward in their chosen profession, vocational training, and/or college.	
The opportunities we give the students to take advancement courses over the summer. Most districts charge students a lot of money to take these types of classes.	Assistance with addressing the language diversity in our district. It is great that we have translation in Spanish but we need to address the diverse language needs of the community.
Complete support from the Board of Education.	Implement training for parents on the different virtual learning platforms used in the district.
Retention of teachers.	Address class size concerns. High class size limits inclusion.
The staff are very creative and work with students to reach them at their level.	There is a lack of diversity in guidance counselors.
We are a responsive service district. We fulfill the needs of the community.	

Group 4

Strengths/Achievements	Challenges/Opportunities
Programming and support for students with special needs	Framework needed to create roadmap for success for students who transition to mainstream (follow up after monitoring after moving out of Spec. Ed. or ESL program)
Relationship building among all community stakeholders	Extracurricular Activities offered at the Elementary Level (opportunities for artistic performance) and Theater at BHS
Reputation of Music Program	Expand STEAM activities PreK-8
Financial support for SAT Prep/College Support	More Parent Involvement
Support of Board of Education for proposed programs	Continue improving communication at home with new technology post pandemic
Listening to Community Needs	More CTE programs
Professional Staff with a focus building relationships with Students/Alumni Returns as Staff/Staff Attrition Rate	Support for students' social/emotional development and wellness - Stigma Free
Variety of Extracurricular activities available for students	Support for families and connecting them with outside resources, introduction to families regarding new curriculum (ie Everyday Math)
Open Enrollment philosophy and opportunities for ambitious students	Support for our teachers and staff
Collaboration & Communication between all 7 schools and response time from school regarding community inquiries	Maintaining facilities district-wide and improving building security at the elementary schools
	Celebrate diversity and have open dialogue regarding current social topics (equity/social justice)

Bergenfield Public Schools Strategic Planning Meeting #1 Outcomes

Group 5

Strengths/Achievements	Challenges/Opportunities
Implementation of Pearson Elevate for Science	Funding opportunities; continued cuts from State cause program cuts or ability to offer additional programs and upgrades to existing programs and facilities
Facilities upgrades of the high school, middle school auditorium and a few rooms, gym at Hoover	Social Emotional Wellness; we can always do more; Counselor at each school with designated space
Expansion of Special Ed program where we are able to keep students within district	Having more diversity within the faculty, staff, and administration
Music department	Social Media: pros and cons with emphasis on how it can affect the future of students
PBIS [positive behavior incentive system] at RWB	Being able to offer a greater number of electives at BHS and RWB additional sections but more variety as well; Internships from the BPD to provide understanding of how things work in the department; would allow for building of rapport? Offer of Chief Rabboh; Additional internships to provide opportunities for motivation; Trade skill internships
College preparedness is remarkable; setting students up for success; college attendance rate	Facilities at the elementary schools; purposeful space for specialized instruction
Computer/ChromeBook implementation and student access on 1:1	Designated space for counselors to allow for confidentiality and students to speak freely in a comfortable environment
Number of AP courses available to BHS students	Lunchtime activities at the elementary schools; playground or soft ground
Diverse student body; student exposure to different cultures	
Elementary school: BSI, Special Education	

Group 6

Strengths/Achievements	Challenges/Opportunities
Supportive leadership	more varied parent involvement
Collective teaching vision	standardized test scores could improve
Engaged parents	More interventions/resources for struggling students
Students are willing to challenge themselves (AP Program)	Community (students, staff, parents) mental health
Varied curriculum offerings	Absenteeism
Music program	More diverse club offerings k-5
Respect among community	STEM for all elementary
Supportive/Strong Board of Ed	Language barrier - more bilingual staff
Diverse community	More collaboration with library - ELL
Technology	Lack of communication between school and community resources
Professional Development	More consistency with procedures & communications among the elementary school buildings

Bergenfield Public Schools Strategic Planning Meeting #1 Outcomes

Group 7

Strengths/Achievements	Challenges/Opportunities
Rigor of curriculum is revising and improving especially in phonics and science	Need for faculty staff administration reflect the diversity of the student body
Culturally diverse	Concern for students succeeding in virtual learning- what will happen post pandemic? And how can these students be supported once a transition begins?
Open enrollment policy - equity and access for all students to rigorous coursework	Prioritize Recruitment and retention of high quality staff
Nationally recognized music program	Need to resume extracurricular activities after post pandemic and reinstate activities that operated prior pandemic
Recruitment and retention of faculty and staff has limited turnover due to warm, caring teachers who want to work at Bergenfield	Increase student/teacher contact time
Preparation of elementary students into middle school	Expand course offerings particularly electives
Mental health support for students' well being	Improve promotion of other programs outside of STEM to attract middle schoolers to high school
Supportive parents/BOE of faculty and administration	Need for faculty staff administration reflect the diversity of the student body
Accessible teachers and administrators for parents/students	Concern for students succeeding in virtual learning- what will happen post pandemic? And how can these students be supported once a transition begins?
Students getting along with each other	
Extracurricular activities are engaging for students	
Technology infrastructure is good to provide what teachers and students need	
Teachers are learning how to use technology resources to instruct students	

The second strategic planning session is scheduled for:

Wednesday, January 27, 2021 from 6:00 – 7:30 pm. The district will send participants the link for the virtual meeting.

During the January 27 meeting, using a similar brainstorming process, we will identify our visions for the Bergenfield Public Schools five years from now.

The final meeting will be held on Wednesday February 10 at 6:00 pm to write goal statements using the input from the two previous sessions.

Please join us. Your commitment to fully participate, is important to the success of this program. We look forward to seeing you!