



Hawthorne Public School District

Is Creating a New Five-Year Strategic Plan

The 3D Strategic Planning Process: Dream, Determination, and Destiny by Design

Session 1: What Are the Strengths, Achievements, and Challenges of the Hawthorne Public Schools?

On **October 4, 2022**, parents and student, community members, school district staff, school district administrators, and Commissioners of the Hawthorne Board of Education came together to initiate strategic planning. The first evening's topic was focused on the current strengths and achievements of, and the challenges and opportunities facing, the Hawthorne Public School District.

We began the process with an overview of the state of the district as presented by Superintendent Richard A. Spirito. During his remarks, Superintendent Spirito examined the progress made under the District's current five-year strategic plan, which is maturing in this current school year. The reasoning for and the methodology of creating a new Strategic Plan for the District was presented to the participants by facilitators Kathleen Helewa and Patricia Rees of the New Jersey School Boards Association. We then broke into six small groups to identify the strengths and points of pride in our district, and to brainstorm what opportunities and challenges the school district faces in the future. After group discussion, each group identified their "top 10" (or thereabouts) lists of District strengths and challenges. Underlying all of our work are the District's Mission Statement, which was distributed to all participants, and underscored by Ms. Helewa in her remarks to the large group.

The information that follows on the next four pages is the work of the small groups, as written by the group members. As discussed with the meeting participants, all meeting outcomes will be posted on the District website for the wider community.



Group 1

Strengths/Accomplishments

- Community / Pride
- Diversity
- Increased programs/ academics
STEM/ AP
- College credit associations
- Special Ed

Challenges/Opportunities

- Market our strengths
- More STEM / STEAM
- Parent involvement
- Funding
- Elem—Clubs
Before / After school
(use HS students?)
- Virtual option w/comments for meetings

Group 2

Strengths/Accomplishments

- Building / District safety procedures / policies and staff (officers) contribute to the success of keeping our community feeling well-served and comfortable
- The commitment of our dedicated teachers and staff contribute to the authenticity of our graduates.
- Teaching style is good.

Challenges/Opportunities

- All staff shortages weaken the desired success of students
- Bullying and behavioral issues need to be taken on and long-lasting solutions shall be implemented
- Communication breakdown(s) due to the changing demographics (language barriers) etc. shall be prevented to function successfully.
- Opportunities such as parent ambassadors shall be utilized in addition to student / teacher mentorships to make meaningful connections
- Keep dress code relaxed. Let students be flexible.
- Perhaps take opportunities to educate some about LGBTQ and to be more accepting of it.
- Make hard-to-understand topics easier to grasp in case of mixed schedules. Example: Physics first instead of Biology.

Group 2 work continues on the following page



Group 2 work , continued from the preceding page

- Support relationships in school to help boost students' confidence.
- Encourage some occasional off-topic creativity. Example: building Legos or drawing in class.
- Do more for students who could be hurt than just giving them ice packs.

Group 3

Strengths/Accomplishments

- Much progress accomplished over the past four years
- Security
- One to One technology
- Programs
 - Character Ed
- More clubs
- Teachers + Admin
- Diverse + Inclusive
- Upgrade of facilities
- Leadership
- Admin working with the Board

Challenges/Opportunities

- Athletics
 - Recruitment
 - Retention
- Academics, Student Achievement
- Youth groups (Town Rec)
- Sense of community between three elementary schools
- Outward communication
- Budget
- Teacher shortage
- Environmental & sustainability

Group 4

Strengths/Accomplishments

- Family atmosphere + close relationships
- In-District Pre-K

Group 4 work continues on the following page



Group 4 work , continued from the preceding page

- Bear Cave
- Special Education programs
- Community support (referendum)
- Social-Emotional Learning outreach
- Added security
- Communication – frequency of info being shared

Challenges/Opportunities

- Special Ed financial cost
- Lack of vocational programs
- Post-COVID
- Public Relations
- Retention of staff
- Retaining community involvement
- Communication -- specifically diversification of home languages

SPECIAL NOTE: P.S. AARON JUDGE HIT #62 TONIGHT! [note—not related to strategic plan, but a historical event that occurred during our session!]

Group 5

Strengths/Accomplishments

- Progress towards future / holds true to community roots
- Family values, good morals
- Community support (both a strength and a challenge/opportunity)
- Comfort level with safety and security
- HPD/ School relationship
- Leadership Camp

Challenges/Opportunities

- Community support (both a challenge / opportunity and a strength)
- Communication
 - Two-way street
 - Streamline communication (multi-school families)
 - Website vs. social media
- More “public” curriculum
- Teacher shortage
 - Impacts instruction
 - Extra curricular
- Grow “The Teachers of Tomorrow” program

Group 5 work continues on the following page



Group 5 work , continued from the preceding page

- Student retention
(from LMS→ HHS)
 - Offerings
 - sports
 - programs
 - work study
 - internships

Group 6

Strengths/Accomplishments

- Math and ELA Labs
Study Skills
- Special programs
- Internships
Opportunities & embracing alternative pathways post-HS
- Librarians and Media Center
Makerspace
- Openness to community & caring community

Challenges/Opportunities

- Staffing & salaries
 - Paras
 - Benefits
 - Lack of subs
- Lack of parent involvement
- Non-English speaking students & parents
 - ELL resources
- Academic lag (COVID)

After sharing our small group results with all the evening's participants, we noted some of the common themes that were emerging: communications, staff retention, safety, and celebrating the school district. At the conclusion of the evening, all were thanked for their wide-ranging contributions and collaborative work.

Our next meeting is set for Tuesday, October 11, at 6pm in the High School cafeteria.

Check-in will begin at **5:30pm**. We will engage in a **Visioning Activity** to help refine our collective vision for the Hawthorne Public School District, which promises to be a truly *fun* exercise! **Our third and final meeting will be held on Tuesday, November 1 at 7pm.** New participants from every facet of our community are welcome to attend all three Strategic Planning meetings. We urge all of the session's participants to come again, and to bring a friend!



New Jersey School Boards Association

413 West State Street • Trenton, NJ 08618 • Telephone: 609.695.7600 • Toll-Free: 888.88NJSBA • Fax: 609.695.0413

The Hawthorne Board of Education and Administration greatly appreciate your highly interactive participation in helping to help create a roadmap for our school district for the next five years. We look forward to working with you at our future sessions!

We look forward to seeing you for our next Strategic Planning meeting, October 11, at 6 pm at the High School Cafeteria. Bring a friend!



Mission Statement

The Hawthorne Public School District will provide a safe and challenging learning environment that develops the whole child academically, behaviorally, socially, and emotionally. In doing so, students are able to reach their maximum potential in a supportive and inclusive school community that welcomes all students, staff, and families to be their authentic selves.

Hawthorne students are empowered to develop heightened communication skills, demonstrate knowledge of citizenship and economic responsibility, make meaningful connections and function successfully as active participants in a complex, changing global world community.

Hawthorne Public Schools
Portrait of a Graduate

Grit Driven
Thinker
Ambitious
Confident
Socially Aware

Balanced: Well-rounded, empathetic individuals that explore a variety of interests and passions while embodying diverse perspectives.

Empowered: Confident, self-motivated lifelong learners with a sense of purpose for themselves and their community.

Active: Intellectually curious, engaging communicators that take initiative as participants within their school and community.

Resilient: Reflective problem-solvers who navigate a variety of challenges to adapt to a complex, ever-changing global society.

Skilled: Resourceful citizens that apply acquired knowledge to real-world experiences while maintaining a strong work ethic and core set of values.

Self-Aware