



New Jersey School Boards Association

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Northern Highlands Regional Creating a Strategic Plan For Northern Highlands Regional High School



Mission Statement

The members of the Northern Highlands community--students, faculty, administration, staff, parents, and other community members--will:

- * Provide a safe, nurturing, and stimulating environment dedicated to human development.
- * Use shared decision-making to create a harmonious environment.
- * Create a community committed to academic excellence and the highest ethical standards.
- * Care about all individuals of our community, their growth and development, their ideas and aspirations.
- * Create an administration that efficiently and effectively serves the needs of students and faculty with the best interests of the school in mind.
- * Foster a highly motivated and innovative staff that inspires students to discover and perpetuate the joy of learning.
- * Involve parents, community, and businesses in the educational process.
- * Perpetually evaluate and adjust the educational process to ensure its relevance to current and future needs.
- * Incorporate conceptual and technological advances both as the object of learning and as tools to facilitate learning.
- * Provide appropriate facilities, materials, equipment, and time for effective learning and teaching.
- * Emphasize the importance of physical and mental well-being by creating an environment that encourages healthy choices and positive self-esteem.
- * Encourage students to appreciate and contribute to our culturally diverse society.
- * Provide an intellectual and cultural environment that is optimal for learning, creativity, and independent thinking.
- * Enable all students not only to master a common core of knowledge and skills, but also to use that knowledge creatively to solve real-life problems.
- * Promote pride in ourselves and our community, and foster school spirit.

Meeting # 1

What Are the Strengths, Achievements, and Challenges of the Northern Highlands Regional School District?

On January 20, 2016 Northern Highlands Regional School District Administration, Board of Education Members, staff, parents, students and community members came together to initiate strategic planning. The evening topic was focused on the strengths, achievements, and challenges/opportunities of the Northern Highlands Regional School District. The meeting began with a welcome and introduction by **Dr. Scot Beckerman**, Superintendent who presented the current “State of the Schools.” NJSBA Field Services Representatives, **Al Annunziata** and **Robynn Meehan**, discussed an introduction to strategic planning. Approximately 50 participant stakeholders then gathered in randomly assigned small group teams to identify the strengths and challenges/opportunities of the Northern Highlands Regional School District.

These teams of participants brainstormed and shared ideas together. After discussion, each group identified their consensus points and presented those to all meeting participants.

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

Group Consensus

Strengths, Accomplishments/Points of Pride and Challenges/Opportunities

Group #1 (Red Dot Team)

Strengths:

- Student achievement
- Vast/extensive curriculum
- Community support
- Excellent teachers/advocates
- Committed community
- Dual college enrollment
- Wide variety of electives
- Available resources
- Motivated/polite students
- Parents
- Extensive co-curricular activities

Challenges:

- Modernization of facilities
- Stress reduction for students
- Interdisciplinary courses
- Improvement of master schedule
- Guidance counselors-expansion
- Integration of technology
- Successful rollout of the 1:1 (technology initiative)
- Increase/grow diversities - cultural sensitivity
- More emphasis on computer science
- Reduce competitiveness within students
- Broaden the definition of success

Group Consensus

Strengths, Accomplishments/Points of Pride and Challenges/Opportunities

Group #2 (Dark Blue Dot Team)

Strengths:

- Teachers are flexible and creative
- Collaboration between quad districts
- Wide variety of courses offered
- High academic achievement
- Lots of resources available
- Hands-on management with teachers and faculty
- Wide variety of extracurriculars
- Attention to “Race to Nowhere”
- Mutual respect between teachers and students
- Creative approaches to schoolwork

Challenges:

- Bullying on social media/cyber bullying
- Facility upkeep - air-conditioning and heating deficiencies
- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Give educators enough professional development for technology
- Budget challenge with grounds and facilities
- Fiscal constraints
- Guidance department understaffed/improve guidance services
- Student safety and security
- Student emphasis on grades and associated stress - Celebrate learning
- Mindset - need to achieve, not love of learning
- Time management and balance

Group Consensus

Strengths, Accomplishments/Points of Pride and Challenges/Opportunities

Group #3 (Green Dot Team)

Strengths:

- Teaching staff creative, strength in reaching all students, dedication, intellect/knowledge
- Variety of courses
- Opportunities for students
- Commitment of staff/community/board of education
- Always looking to improve/self-assessment
- Students come wanting to learn/be challenged/prepared/motivated
- Strong test scores (standardized tests)
- One-on-one initiative (laptops for all students)
- “Ambassador Program” - social transition
- Prepare for college - admissions process
- Prepare for college (academic)
- Food

Challenges:

- Continue to improve dialogue with for sending districts (cooperation to get altogether)
- Integrating one-on-one initiative (laptops) into the curriculum/authentic use of
- Improve the way we “reach” all of our students
- Academic transition (increase support)
- Facilities improvement/expansion (technology/sports)
- Balance of wellness initiative (to continue)/community and school
- Revisit homework policy/wellness
- Budget constraints/prioritize dollars

Group Consensus

Strengths, Accomplishments/Points of Pride and Challenges/Opportunities

Group #4 (Light Blue Dot Team)

Strengths:

- Student performances
- Extracurricular offerings
- Articulation with sending districts/towns
- Support of community and parents
- Course offerings
- Transition from middle school
- Staff - quality and commitment
- Facilities
- Safety and security

Challenges:

- State-mandated requirements impede efficiency
- Communication
- Career education
- Student involvement in decision-making
- Integrating technology with sending districts
- Transparency with cost on sports, curriculum, events, etc...
- Pay for IT (instructional technology) – consistency
- Balancing student wellness versus student achievement K-12

Group Consensus

Strengths, Accomplishments/Points of Pride and Challenges/Opportunities

Group #5 (Black Dot Team)

Strengths:

- Graduation rate
- Extracurricular
- Cafeteria
- AP classes
- Quality of staff
- Professional development
- Rigor of classes
- Community - transition project
- Inter-district communication
- Campus
- College prep
- Opportunity

Challenges:

- Attendance
- Pressure (inside and outside)
- Mental health
- Obsessions with grades
- Internships/community service
- Communication between students, parents, faculty
- Distortion of success - Expansion of idea of success
- Time
- 1:1 (technology initiative)
- Finances

The second strategic planning session is scheduled for:

Thursday, February 11, 2016 at 7:00pm at the NHRHS Auditorium

Next meetings are scheduled for 1.5 hours and end promptly to respect our participants' time.

During the next meeting we will create a **shared vision together** for the future of Northern Highlands Regional School District ... we will talk about our aspirations and expectations for our students and school district.

Please join us!

For additional information, click on this link to visit the district website:

<http://www.northernhighlands.org/Page/5542>

We look forward to seeing you!