

# 3D Strategic Plan

2023 - 2028

Strategic Plan  
Executive Summary

Prepared for the

## Blairstown Elementary School District

**Facilitated by: NJSBA Field Services Department**

Kathleen Helewa, Field Service Representative for Warren County



**New Jersey School Boards Association**  
*Serving Local Boards of Education Since 1914*

# 3D Strategic Plan

**2023-28 Blirstown Elementary School District**

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## **Acknowledgements**

The Blirstown Elementary School District's 3D Strategic Planning process, completed during the 2022-2023 academic year, could not have occurred without the support, cooperation and dedication of the following people and groups:

### **Members of the Blirstown Board of Education**

**Jeremy Cook, President**

**Shanna Sikkes, Vice President**

**Jennifer McElroy**

**Bradford Van Valkenburg**

**Kathryn Hawkswell**

**Sotie Hambos**

**Erinn Allison**

**Kevin Doell**

**Karen Klein**

### **Superintendent**

**Dr. Patrick Ketch**

### **School Principal**

**Colleen Silvestri**

### **Business Administrator/ Board Secretary**

**Matthew Herzer**

The Board and Administration would like especially to thank the community members, teachers, and parents who worked together in a series of open meetings to create the 2023-28 Blirstown Elementary School District Strategic Plan.



# 3D Strategic Planning Process

## Executive Summary

### **A. Educating the Board to make an informed decision**

In October of 2022, Kathleen Helewa of the New Jersey School Boards Association presented information to the Blairstown Board of Education regarding the NJSBA 3D Strategic Planning process and facilitation.

The information included a review of the following information and requirements:

- commitment of time and resources
- school and community level involvement
- the Board's role in the process
- potential participants to be included in the process

The Board contracted with NJSBA for these services.

### **B. 3 D Strategic Plan Meetings**

Ms. Helewa and facilitated three Strategic Planning sessions at the Blairstown Elementary School with Board members, Administration, teachers, and parents and community members. The following outcomes were derived from these meetings:

1. The strengths of and challenges facing the Blairstown Elementary School District;
2. Visions for the future of the school, along with goal areas for the Strategic Plan; and
3. Draft goals and objectives for the District's Strategic Plan.

Outcomes from those Strategic Planning meetings are appendices to this document.

### **C. Developing the Action Plans**

The Superintendent and his Administrative Team will develop action plans to implement the 3D Strategic Plan. The action plans will include the following:

1. The actions necessary needed to accomplish the goals and objectives,
2. Select measures for accountability,
3. Resources required, and
4. A timeline for implementation.

### **D. Next Steps**

The Board of Education will adopt the plan and implementation will begin.



# BLAIRSTOWN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT

## MISSION STATEMENT

**In partnership with home and community, Blairstown Elementary School is dedicated to providing an engaging, comprehensive education.**

**A passion for learning is ignited through an enriched learning environment. While celebrating individuality, our students develop confidence, competence, and character.**

**All students have the opportunity to achieve their highest potential on a quest of lifelong learning to succeed in a global, 21st century.**



# **GOAL AREAS**

**GOAL AREA # 1  
Curriculum and Instruction**

**GOAL AREA # 2  
Students' Executive Functioning Skills**

**GOAL AREA # 3  
Social-Emotional Learning**

**GOAL AREA # 4  
Community**



# GOAL AREA # 1

## Curriculum and Instruction

**Goal Statement:** To develop curriculum and instruction that fosters critical thinking skills through the use of active learning and purposeful technology.

### **Objectives:**

1. Prioritize budgeting for smaller class size, as resources allow.
2. Enhance differentiated instruction to optimize student achievement for all learners.
3. Incorporate active learning strategies to promote independence and student ownership of their own educational experiences.
4. Reinforce and expand learned concepts through the use of supportive technology.



# GOAL AREA # 2

## Students' Executive Functioning Skills

**Goal Statement:** To optimize executive functioning skills to be productive, successful citizens.

### **Objectives:**

1. Develop a service mindset while thinking of community needs.
2. Foster students' taking ownership of actions and decisions to increase accountability.
3. Create a safe learning environment to allow students to take risks, fail, and grow.
4. Collaborate and communicate with peers and adults to problem solve to enhance creativity.





# GOAL AREA # 3

## Social-Emotional Learning

**Goal Statement:** Prioritize SEL to foster greater self-awareness in the BES community, so that we are better equipped to build positive relationships and navigate the challenges ahead.

### **Objectives:**

1. Utilize a comprehensive SEL curriculum consistent through all classrooms.
2. Offer teachers opportunities and resources so that they can will grow their understanding of authentic Social Emotional Learning objectives.
3. Enhance teamwork among all school stakeholders to benefit the whole child experience at BES.
4. Provide support and resources to families.



# GOAL AREA # 4

## Community

**Goal Statement:** To increase the BES community's awareness of being a part of the larger community of the Township.

**Objectives:**

1. Create intra-school activities to connect different grade levels.
2. Reach out to various organizations and events in the town such as nursing homes, town wide cleanup days, gardening clubs, food pantries, et cetera to involve students in the Township's workings.
3. Integrate activities with and for the Township, creating a new paradigm of social and constructive interaction.



# **Appendix A**

## **Superintendent's State of the District Report**

**Presented February 1, 2023**



# BLAIRSTOWN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STRATEGIC PLANNING

2022-2023 State of the School



# DISTRICT MISSION STATEMENT

In partnership with home and community, Blirstown Elementary School is dedicated to the mission of providing an engaging and comprehensive education.

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# District Goals

- Provide academic support to all students through the use of meaningful technology, purposeful programs, and differentiated instruction in order to enhance student achievement and provide equitable access for all students.
- Increase mental health and SEL opportunities within the classroom and throughout the curricular program and provide resources and opportunities for families, in order to promote a positive school climate and students' emotional well-being.
- Provide quality professional development to support our teachers and staff.

# Blairstown Elementary School Facts

- This is a preschool through sixth grade school.
- Student population is 430 students.
- We have 85 staff members in the building.
- Currently we have 105 students in our school with an IEP.

# Biggest Challenges

- Budget Cuts (\$2)
  - 2018-2019: Loss \$65,883
  - 2019-2020: Loss \$44,192
  - 2020-2021: Loss \$309,900
  - 2021-2022: Loss \$237,808
  - 2022-2023: Loss \$72,00
- Inflation
  - Cost of materials
  - Cost of labor
- Old building with numerous things that need to be fixed
- Staffing
  - Substitutes
  - Paraprofessionals
  - Bus drivers



# Curriculum Update

- Curriculum is updated every five years
- The following was updated this past year:
  - Social Studies
  - Comprehensive Health and phys. Ed
  - Music
  - Computer design
  - World Language
  - Visual Art
- BES utilizes the following:
  - Math: Revel Math
  - Science: Mystery Science
  - Social Studies: TCI
  - Readers & Writers Workshop
  - Foundations for phonics
  - Just Words for word study in the upper grades
- Benchmark Assessments:
  - Linkit!
  - Fountas and Pinnell
  - Foundations
  - Revel Math Benchmarks
  - CommonLit

# Response to Intervention (RtI)

- Multi-Tiered System of Support (State Mandated)
  - Three tiered System
    - Tier 1: Classroom Interventions
    - Tier 2: Pull-out Interventions with an RtI interventionist 2 to 3 times per week.
    - Tier 3: Increased time with RtI Interventionist 4 to 5 times per week.
  - Three RtI Interventionist
    - K-2: Mrs. Fleming
    - 3-4: Mrs. Menzel
    - 5-6: Mrs. Zaleski
- During the 2021-2022 school year we incorporated BEAR time into the master schedule.
- BEAR time allows students to get the support they need and to participate in other programs, such as band, chorus, related services, and GATE.

# Technology

- 1:1 District
- Chromebook Carts in every room
- K-2 have touch screen chromebooks
- The district has added 12 new  
promethean Boards

# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Opportunities include, but are not limited to:
- In-district workshops
  - Reading Strategies
  - Climate and Culture
  - Utilizing Data
- Out-of-district workshops
- PLCs-Professional Learning Communities (Meet three times per year)

# District Improvements

- Newly Renovated gym
  - New floor
  - Updated paint
  - New grate covers
- New elevator lift by the cafeteria
- Mantrap
- New roof over the 1929 section of the building
- Interior fire doors
- New walkie talkies with a repeater for better service
- New security cameras (almost 100% covered)
- Upgraded computer network
- Added a sensory room

# The End!

## Contact Information :

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Colleen Silvestri, Principal  
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# Appendix B

## Strengths / Accomplishments Challenges / Opportunities





## **The Blairstown Elementary School District Is Creating a New Three-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 Blairstown Elementary School District?**

On the evening of **February 1, 2023**, parents, community members, teachers, school Administration, and Board of Education members came together to initiate the process to renew Blairstown Elementary's Strategic Plan. The first evening's topic was focused on the current strengths and achievements of, and challenges and opportunities facing, the Blairstown Elementary School District.

We began the process with an overview of the District as presented by Superintendent Dr. Patrick Ketch and Principal Colleen Silvestri. The reasoning for and the methodology of creating a new Strategic Plan was presented to the participants by facilitator Kathleen Helewa of the New Jersey School Boards Association. We then gathered in four 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 list of strengths and challenges for the district. Underlying all of our work are the District's Mission Statement, which was distributed to all participants, and featured by Ms. Helewa in her remarks to the large group.

The information that follows is the work of the small groups. As discussed with the meeting participants, all meeting outcomes will be listed in this memo and will be posted on the District website for the wider community.

#### **Group 1**

##### ***Strengths/Accomplishments***

- RTI / intervention programs
- Teachers / staff
- Students
- Community
- Specials / enrichment classes
- PTG

*(continues on the next page)*





*(Group 1 work, continued)*

## ***Challenges/Opportunities***

- \$ Money / Funding / Budget...
- Staff (subs, paras)
- Pulling subs / jumping classes
- Coverages
- Adequate advertising of open positions and pay rate  
Social [media] shares of needs, Town Page
- Community Communication
- Special Ed Continuity
- SEPAG (**Strong**)
- Concert times / Event times –NOT great for working parents

## **Group 2**

### ***Strengths/Accomplishments***

- **RTI & Teachers**  
-Mindfulness movement
- Performing Arts Opportunities to continue
- Pre-school Staff
- S.T.E.M.  
-More exposure!
- Staff Flexibility
- Afterschool Clubs

### ***Challenges/Opportunities***

- Focus more on gray area of assessments (arrow to RTI/ Teachers, above)
- Performing Arts Opportunities to continue
- Training for paras  
-ABA: Applied Behavior Analysis  
-general training
- Substitute shortage
- After-effects of Covid
- Nurture this program (arrow from Afterschool Clubs, above)
- Parent involvement / participation

*(continues on the next page)*



## **Group 3**

### ***Strengths/Accomplishments***

- Technology
- Infrastructure
- Experienced teachers
- Small class sizes
- Special area instruction
- Community

### ***Challenges/Opportunities***

- Updated website
- Bussing/schedule
- Substitutes
- Decreasing funds
- Budget cuts
- Increasing class sizes
- Social emotional well-being of students & staff
- Uncertainty of future
- Social media

## **Group 4**

### ***Strengths/Accomplishments***

- Technology
- Acknowledgements
- Diesel!
- Consistency & Transparency

### ***Challenges/Opportunities***

- Monitor screen time (age appropriate)
- Online tests (perhaps re-eval use based on grade level)
- Continue to build social skills
- Perhaps celebrate the strengths in each student throughout the year
- Grade Level Assignments
  - consistent across homeroom s
  - intentional homework
- Consistency & Transparency

*(continues on the next page)*



After sharing our small group results with all the evening's participants, all were thanked for their wide-ranging contributions and collaborative work.

Our next meeting is set for **Wednesday, February 15, at 7pm in the BES Library**. Check-in will begin at **6:30pm**. We will engage in a **Visioning Activity** to help refine our collective vision for the Blairstown Elementary School District, which promises to be a truly *fun* exercise! We strongly encourage all to **bring a friend** to our next meeting. New participants from all facets of the community are welcome at all three Strategic Planning meetings.

The Blairstown Elementary School District Board of Education and Administration greatly appreciate your highly interactive participation in helping to help create a roadmap for our wonderful 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, February 15, at 7pm in the Blairstown Elementary School Library. Bring a friend!***



### **Blairstown Elementary School Mission Statement**

In partnership with home and community, Blairstown Elementary School is dedicated to the mission of providing an engaging, comprehensive education.

A passion for learning is ignited through an enriched learning environment. While celebrating individuality, our students develop confidence, competence and character.

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# Appendix C

## Visioning Exercise Outcomes





# The Blairstown Elementary School District

## Is Creating a New Five-Year Strategic Plan

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

#### Session 2: What Are Our Visions for the Blairstown Elementary School?

On the evening of Wednesday, March 1, 2023 (rescheduled from February 15), parents, community members, school district staff and administrators, and members of the Blairstown Board of Education came together for the second of three meetings regarding strategic planning for our school district. The previous meeting's topic, on February 1, focused on Superintendent Ketch's State of the District report, and the current strengths and achievements of, and the challenges and opportunities facing, the Blairstown Elementary School District. This evening's topic was our unfettered aspirations for the District and its students.

Kathleen Helewa of the New Jersey School Boards Association recapped for the group the purpose and methodology of creating a new strategic plan for the District. We were then asked to imagine — what if, in five years' time, at the maturation of the strategic plan we are creating, Blairstown Elementary had become a nationally-recognized school district for providing an outstanding education for its students? What if the national media was writing about Blairstown so public school districts nationwide could emulate what happens *here*?

We discussed the literacies of 21<sup>st</sup>-century learning and the “Cs” that we want to inculcate in our students, among them: Compassion, Character, Critical Thinking, Collaboration, Communication, Creativity, Community and Citizenship. We also looked to the District's Mission Statement, which underscores all of our work in these strategic planning sessions.

We then gathered in four small groups to “write” a news article that would detail our hypothetical success. The groups were asked to come up with a title and key points for their article. In this exercise, we were asked to disregard any real-life restrictions that could be barriers to achieving our visions. Groups used a consensus process, and were randomly assigned and adjusted for a balance of stakeholder viewpoints.

The information that follows is the work of the small groups. As discussed with the meeting participants, all meeting outcomes are listed in this memo and will be posted on the District website for the wider community.

## **Group 1**

**Title: “Growing a Community of Confident Children”**

### **Key Visions:**

- Community / mentoring between kids  
e.g., 6<sup>th</sup> graders mentor 4<sup>th</sup>...3<sup>rd</sup> graders & K, etc.  
projects, books
- Applied science → hands on activities, how and why things work → fosters curiosity
- Green / sustainability (community clean up days), compost, school garden
- Students are prepared for diverse opportunities
- Social / emotional learning integrated into all areas of school

## **Group 2**

**Title: “Blairstown Goes Back to Basics”**

### **Key Visions:**

- Develop character by contributing to the community’s needs
- Whole child focus
- Non-traditional classroom arrangement and seating
- Physical movement using nature as a guide  
\*Health and wellness
- Student becomes teacher to engage parent
- Appropriate integration of meaningful tech usage to support hands-on learning

## **Group 3**

**Title: “Blairstown Goes Back to the Basics: Students Taking Ownership of their Learning”**

### **Key Visions:**

- Taking risks and accepting challenges
- Problem solving and critical thinking
- Executive functioning
- Life skills
- Meaningful technology in moderation

## Group 4

### **Title: “BES Empowers Students’ Strengths”**

#### **Key Visions:**

- Cohesiveness
- Close-knit: students, staff, parents, community
- SEL—strong foundation (Maslow before Bloom)
- Individualized needs addressed

After the small groups shared their work with the large group of all participants, all present agreed, based on our shared visions and the common themes that emerged this evening and the work from meeting #1, that the following themes would be appropriate goal areas for Blairstown Elementary’s new five-year strategic plan:

1. Curriculum and Instruction
  - *meaningful use of technology to support hands-on learning*
2. Basic Life Skills
  - *autonomy*
  - *soft skills*
  - *communication*
  - *accountability / ownership*
  - *service mindset / thinking of others*
3. Integrating Active Learning
4. Social- Emotional Learning
  - *whole child*
  - *staff*
5. Community

Dr. Ketch and Ms. Helewa thanked all present for their excellent work and robust conversations, which will serve to propel the students of Blairstown Elementary to new heights and a successful future.

Our next step is to use the work from our previous two meetings to write draft goal statements and supporting objectives for Blairstown Elementary’s new strategic plan. Participants will self-select the small group and goal area in which they would like to work. Our third and final meeting will take place on **Monday, March 13**, at the BES school library. Pre-registration will not be necessary. **Check in will begin at 6:30pm, and the program will begin at 7pm.**

The Blairstown Board of Education and Administration greatly appreciate your participation and good work in this crucial endeavor. We look forward to seeing you at our final meeting.

***Please plan on joining us for our final meeting on March 13, beginning at 7pm at Blairstown Elementary School Library. Attend with a friend!***



**Blairstown Elementary School Mission Statement**

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# Appendix D

## Draft Goals and Objective Exercise





# **Blairstown Elementary School District Is Creating a New Five-Year Strategic Plan**

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

### **Session 3: Drafting Goals & Objectives for our Strategic Plan**

On the evening of Monday, March 13, 2023, parents, teachers and staff, school district administrators, community members, and members of the Blairstown Board of Education came together for our final strategic planning session. Throughout three meetings, our work delineated the strengths and challenges of the school district, our unbridled visions for Blairstown Elementary School for the next five years, and finally, translated that work into draft goal statements and supporting objectives for the new Strategic Plan.

After welcoming all to the evening's session, Kathleen Helewa of the New Jersey School Boards Association recapped our work thus far and the outcomes from our second meeting, which established five goal areas for the new Plan: Curriculum and Instruction, Basic Life Skills, Integrating Active Learning, Social-Emotional Learning, and Community.

As a large group, we reviewed the process for writing a broad, overarching goal statement and supporting objectives. Participants then broke into small groups, each working on a separate goal area. After discussion among the small group participants, we merged the goal areas #1, Curriculum and Instruction and #3, Integrating Active Learning, into a single goal area to address Curriculum.

Small groups reviewed the total outcomes from the first and second sessions, and the data points from the "Strengths & Challenges" and the "Visions" exercises, which participants categorized to reference each goal area. Using a consensus process, the small groups employed the data points and their awareness and expertise to write a draft objectives and a goal statement for their goal areas, which will be refined and prepared by Administration into a formal document for Board approval.

All small group work was reported to the large group at the end of the evening to the satisfaction of all assembled. After the session, Dr. Ketch and Ms. Helewa offered sincere thanks to all involved and gratitude to the Board of Education for the opportunity to facilitate the process.

On the following pages is a summary of the evening's work.

### **Goal #1: Curriculum & Instruction**

**Goal Statement:** To develop a curriculum and instruction that fosters critical thinking skills through active learning and purposeful technology.

#### **Objectives:**

1. Prioritize budgeting for smaller class sizes.
2. Enhance differentiated instruction to optimize student achievement for all learners.
3. Incorporate active learning strategies to promote independence and ownership of their educational experiences.
4. Reinforce and expand learned concepts through the use of supportive technology.

### **Goal #2: Basic Life Skills**

**Goal Statement:** To optimize executive functioning skills to be productive, successful citizens.

#### **Objectives:**

1. Develop a service mindset while thinking of community needs.
2. Taking ownership of actions and decisions to increase accountability.
3. Create a safe learning environment for students to take risks, fail, and grow.
4. Collaborate and communicate with peers and adults to problem solve to enhance creativity.

### **Goal #3: Social-Emotional Learning**

**Goal Statement:** Prioritize SEL to foster greater self-awareness in the BES community so that we are better equipped to build positive relationships and navigate the challenges ahead

#### **Objectives:**

1. Utilize a comprehensive SEL curriculum consistent throughout all classrooms.
2. Offer professional development opportunities within the SEL framework.
3. Strengthen relationships to enhance teamwork among staff and admin.
4. Provide support and resources to families.

### **Goal #4: Community**

**Goal Statement:** To increase the BES community's awareness of being a part of the larger community of the Township, to integrate activities with and for the Township, creating a new paradigm of social and constructive interaction.

#### **Objectives:**

1. Create intra-school activities to connect different grade levels.

2. Reach out to organizations and events in the town, such as nursing homes, town-wide cleanup days, gardening clubs, food pantries, et cetera, to involve students in the Township's workings.
3. Present BES as a source of service for the community, whether it be fundraising, theatrical productions, or enlisting community members to volunteer with BES students.

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**Next Steps**

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Superintendent Dr. Ketch will review the draft Strategic Plan with Ms. Helewa to make necessary refinements in anticipation of its presentation to the Board. The plan will be printed in document form by the New Jersey School Boards Association and delivered to the Blairstown Board of Education for formal acceptance and vote at a BOE meeting in the near future, date to be announced. The Administrative Team, led by Dr. Ketch, will develop action plans for all areas of the Strategic Plan. The Board and Administration will rely on the new Strategic Plan when setting annual District and Board Goals for the next five years. The Blairstown BOE will schedule periodic updates on progress regularly during the year at BBOE public meetings.

Working with such a dedicated group of individuals who so willingly support the students and staff of the Blairstown Elementary School and the community has been a pleasure. Certainly, the unique plan that results from all of your good work will productively guide the District in alignment with the community's vision for its students. We look forward to seeing the Blairstown Elementary School flourish under this new, five-year Strategic Plan.

