



Creating a Strategic Plan for the Mahwah Public Schools

Mission Statement

The mission of the Mahwah Schools is to provide every student with the opportunity to maximize his/her educational and career potential in safe, high quality facilities, led by well trained and dedicated administrators, teachers and support staff. Our K-12 school district consists of six schools which serve a student population of approximately 3000. The Mahwah community supports its schools, and attendance at school functions by parents and community members serves to document this support.

The information provided in the NJ School Performance Report provides a snapshot of how our schools are performing in selected areas. Mahwah students continue to outperform their peers from across the state on state assessments demonstrating that they are meeting the benchmarks of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards. Mahwah also takes pride in the number of Advanced Placement courses offered at the high school, its music and art programs available to students throughout the district, its athletic programs offered at the high school, and its commitment to community service initiatives. Additionally, the number of Mahwah graduates taking Advanced Placement tests continues to rise, and the number of students that go on to formal post graduate study is at an all-time high.

While we remain proud of the accomplishments of our schools and our students, as illustrated in the NJ School Performance Report, we are also aware that the information provided only tells part of the story. The NJ School Performance Report does not consider areas of school performance in such areas as music, art, and drama, nor does it address issues such as student and parent satisfaction. To learn firsthand how our schools are performing, we encourage all Mahwah residents to attend Board of Education meetings, become active in school related organizations, attend school sponsored events or arrange for a visit to any of our six schools.

In closing, our district exists for its students. Our children, who are our future, give us the opportunity to work together, despite our differences, and find commonality of purpose. This purpose is to provide our students with a comprehensive educational program within a safe supportive school environment that recognizes the worth and dignity of all individuals. For this opportunity, we are fortunate and look forward with confidence to the school year knowing our students will be provided with a quality education so necessary for them to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

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

On Thursday, December 12, 2019 Mahwah 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 Mahwah Public Schools. The meeting began with welcoming remarks by Kim Barron, President of the Board of

Education. Dr. Lauren Schoen, Superintendent, was joined by Dr. Michael DeTuro in providing an informative overview of the district. Facilitator, Matt Lee, from the New Jersey School Boards Association, introduced the strategic planning methodology and assisted throughout the process.

More than 135 community, parent, and staff participants gathered in 13 randomly-assigned groups to identify the Strengths/Achievements and Challenges/Opportunities of the Mahwah 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 presented those to the full group of meeting participants in a gallery review fashion.

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.mahwah.k12.nj.us/domain/678>) to share the group work during the course of the strategic planning process.

Group Consensus: Strengths/Achievements & Challenges/Opportunities

Strengths/Achievements	Challenges/Opportunities
Community engagement	Ramapo Ridge - no sports
Cross curriculum	More social opportunities
Team dedication	HS - Additional Team Rooms & Locker Room
Students are well-prepared for college	GW - Faculty Room
Social emotional learning (K–8)	Discipline
Mahwah Schools Foundation	HS - Renovate the Athletic Team Rooms
HS - Room 107 Life Skills Apartment	HS - Transportation for athletic events and skiing
Mahwah School Foundation homeschool organization	Structure after school (library = social scene)
School to home communication	HS - Lighting in front of high school needs to be upgraded for security.
Secondary - Option 2 programs	RR- Design and use of outdoor courtyards / outdoor campus areas (outdoor learning spaces)
Secondary - 1:1 initiative at RR and MHS; expanded and enhanced integration of instructional technology	Class size
Facilities	HS - Speed bump in back service road by YMCA
LM - Promethean Boards in all classrooms	RR- Additional Clubs
Great programs	Elementary - Cross-Curricular integration-all subject areas?: Authentic real tasks; Connected internal and outside of our schools
BR- STEAM Lab/Makerspace	RR- Advisory Program (Leader in Me; Dylan’s Wingman)
HS - Electronic Platforms - Newsela, Edpuzzle, and NoRedInk	Elementary - Integration of SIOP strategies: What is the accountability?
LM - Instructional Resources	
Openness	
Elementary - Commitment to Social-Emotional Learning	
Great variety of academic courses	
Elementary - K-3 level consistency	

Strengths/Achievements	Challenges/Opportunities
Curriculum	HS - Electronic Access Gate on the road in front of the gym
BR- Playground area	JK - Intercom/Clock system
Accessing technology	Parental involvement
Elementary - Commitment to Social-Emotional Learning	Secondary - Additional Help Opportunities: Before School; After School; Within the school day
LM - Main Entrance/Man Trap	HS - Grass over old driveway next to stop light
Facilities	Elementary - Turn-Key of PD: What system or structure can we put in place?
Staff	Scheduling for pull-out (music program)
Music program and theater	Secondary - Advisory: Update lessons and activities - SEL umbrella / framework; EASEL Kernels (Harvard); Youth Leadership: Dylan's Wingman; Maurice Elias: Boosting Emotional Intelligence in Students; RULER; Emotional Intelligence, Character Lab (Yale)
Communication	Secondary - Arts: Performing Arts - Recruitment efforts; Student retention (incl. 5-6, 6-8, and 8-9; Grading
Full day kindergarten	RR- Athletics
Have a person to teach Spanish, not Rosetta Stone	Pathways need to be available to everyone – more class spots need to be available
Secondary - G&T program	HS - Consistency with paraprofessional
Diversity of student population	LM - Intercom upgrades in the 2nd floor Tech Lab
Social / emotional balance K - 5	Bullying - social media
Staff	Elementary - Lesson Plans: Meaningful/Purposeful
Facilities	HS - 15 Passenger Van for Life Skills/SLE
STEAM	Elementary - Social Studies Curriculum
Snow day call	Transitions between schools
HS - Gymnasium/upgraded gym floor	HS - Windows need to be replaced in some classrooms
Arts, music programs	Elementary - Fine Arts: Minimal performing arts opportunities
Recent contract agreement	Secondary - Library Media Center: Program - design and purpose; Function, design, and access of the facility; How do program and facility support programs across the curriculum?
Well prepared	High pressure, anxiety
Music & Arts	Substitute teacher guidance and safety
School events	
RR- Electronic Platforms - Newsela, EdPuzzle	
Professional development	
Secondary - After school SAT and ACT prep	
Transparency	
HS - Cardio room	
Large variety of courses	
Staff professional development	
LM - Building is only 18 years old	
Parents	
Supportive HSO and MSF	
Secondary - Commitment to PD-offering in a variety of ways at different times	
Technology: 1:1, 3D, STEAM	
Diversity	
RR- Painting - Freshening Up Hallways	

Strengths/Achievements	Challenges/Opportunities
1:1 initiative; new laptops 6 - 12	JK - Heating/Cooling units in the classrooms
Elementary - Access to materials	Current/up-to-date curriculum
Arts, music programs	LM - Upgrades to playground (Equipment)
New counselor at Ramapo Ridge	Parental involvement
Reputation	Technology teacher at younger grades
Visual / Performing Arts	JK - Upgrade sound system
LM - Atrium/Indoor and Outdoor	Communication
HS - Department offices	Mahwah high school guidance needs to know student
LM - Large Media Center	Gifted and talented
Resources, materials, staff	LM - Regulations to air and heat within the classroom
Lunch help available at Ramapo Ridge Middle School	More civics
All-encompassing clubs and opportunities K- 5	Secondary - Extra-Curricular Activities: Athletics/Clubs; Before/After school learning opportunities
Community involvement	Keeping up with changing technology and aging infrastructure
Sports programs	Inclusion of IEP/504 students
Counselor for struggling learners at Ramapo Ridge	Population growth
HS - Supplies - office/classroom	Laptops all day long for students
Cross curriculum	Career internship programs
HS - Athletic stadium/turf field	Social emotional learning at Middle School
Elementary - Professional Development: Choice; Turn-Key	Address stress and mental health
Parent involvement	Non college-bound student path
Athletics	HS - Course outside of the school day
Teachers support students that need additional help	GW - Main Office Conference Room
MEA scholarship support	GW - Classroom Furniture
Secondary - Parent Guidance Programs- 7- Coffee with counselors	Prep for non-college career path too - much focus on College
Secondary - STEAM Building-Life Skills Rooms	HS - Additional Turf Fields at MHS
RR- Building clean out of old/outdated equipment/supplies/storage	Community involvement
Secondary - Academic Supports	RR- Dedicated Maker Space /VR
Ability to attend professional development	Secondary - Differentiation: Meeting the needs of all learners; Ensuring all students, at both ends of and Sec - across the learning spectrum, are challenged appropriately (rigor and design relative to learner)
Secondary - STEAM Building-Life Skills Rooms	Secondary - Arts: Visual Arts - Program (vertical articulation; skills, content, and learner experience; Program (learner experience; progression grades 6-8)
Secondary - Arts Programs- Theater and Fine Arts	
Small School population	
Secondary - AP Courses- 24	
Elem - Special Education program- diverse offerings: FDU relationship-Orton MSRI program	

Strengths/Achievements	Challenges/Opportunities
MSF and HSO	Additional certified media specialist
Communication to families	Safety and Security
JK- Media Center upgrades	HS - Outdoor classroom needs to be completed.
Community Support (MSF, HSO, etc.)	Keep ahead of the curve what is going on around the country?
Mindfulness	HS - Library Media Center-Program and Facility
Fiscal responsibility	HS - Replacement of bleachers in the Gymnasium
Secondary - Commitment to Teams- RRMS	RR- Turf Field (soccer) - PE & Athletics
Elementary - K-3 level consistency	Class size
Motivated and supportive parents	HS - Event bathrooms and Concessions for Outdoor Events
Special education services	RR- World Languages 6-12; secondary continuum
School pride	HS - Cameras for the T3/Main building walkway
Secondary - Athletics- CoCurricular programs	Parent engagement
Access to Administration	HS - Vertical Art- 8-9
Continuing education for staff/professional development	JK - Cellular Service/Wifi
Sports programs	Middle School/Joyce Kilmer co-curricular activities
Evaluating courses that are relevant, rigorous and current for students	Maintaining smaller classroom sizes to benefit instruction
Mahwah High School - opportunities for every type of student	HS - Cafeteria needs to be updated
Secondary - Pathways Programs- MHS	HS - Science Labs 130's wing
Elementary - Connection with kids on a personal level	JK - Classroom/Lounge Phones
Elementary - STEAM and Makerspace	HS - JFC sign on the Gymnasium facade - The gym is named but with no signage
BR- Nature center	Take a break from screens in class
The Arts	Mental health education at an earlier age
Supportive administrative	Gifted & talented begin younger than 4th grade
LM - 3 playgrounds	Mental health/anxiety
Laptops / equipment	Secondary - Student Voice: provide an opportunity for representative student group to garner insights to student experience; ideas and input: 4Ps - programs, practice, procedures/policies, possibilities
Athletics	Awareness of mental health services K-12 in preparation for life beyond more support staff/services
Community	Career counseling continuity
GW - Updated Intercom System	GW - Indoor space for physical education
Guidance at Mahwah High School has seen family through	
Elementary - Workshop Approach	
HS - T3 - STEAM Building	
RR- Flexible Seating	
Ongoing communication (district-home)	
Diversity of the curriculum	

Strengths/Achievements	Challenges/Opportunities
HS - Building clean out of old/outdated equipment/supplies/storage	Testing doesn't take priority over Core Curriculum and creativity
RR- Teacher's lounge	Have a librarian / media specialist (separate people)
JK- Outdoor Classroom Space	Substance abuse
Secondary - Teacher Volition- Teacher Choice	Transition between grades/schools
Elementary - STEAM and Makerspace	RR- Library Media Center function and design
Facilities	HS - Dual Enrollment- marketing/get the word out
RR- Supplies - office/classroom	BR- Physical Education facility
Mindfulness initiative	Homework
Buildings and grounds	Working life skills into programs related to special education
JK- Sufficient Funding	HS - Structured Learning Experience
Special services	Specialized programs who identify as special needs (in District)
Secondary - Post Secondary Success	Sustainability
Secondary - Vertical Articulation	BR- All-purpose room
T3 building	Social emotional learning (High School level)
HS - Outdoor eating spaces	Handwriting/typing
Secondary - Dual Enrollment Programs	More information from guidance to students and parents choices, classes -6th grade and on
BR- Promethean boards	JK - New Chairs to Support Large Events
HS - T3-Woodshop (ongoing improvements)	JK - Classroom Furniture
RR- Conference Room	Secondary - Using teams to leverage interdisciplinary connections and experiences: Update / Replace lessons, projects, assessments; joint lessons, projects, assessments; Planning of assessment load for students (2019-2020, two per day)
BR- Outdoor Classroom (incomplete)	HS - Auditorium needs to be updated
Elementary - Remedial Programs: Summer School; Tutoring	Transportation
Innovative technology approach	RR- Conference Room
Fiscal responsibility	HS - Teacher Evaluation Instrument-Researching tool that provides more clarity
Teachers	HS - New PA and clock system
JK- Sufficient Academic Resources	Guidance needs to interact more with child from the start (get to know them)
RR- Administrative Office	HS - Flexible seating
LM - STEAM Room	Elementary - I&RS process; Implementation; Data protocol - How are we using to drive instruction?
Elementary - Access to materials	
Faculty appreciation	
Community Support	
JK- Consistent Classroom Resources	
"Ridge Road" closeness	
Technology	
GW - Funding for Elementary Supervisor	
Community Support	
Depth of curriculum	
Student involvement and pride	

Strengths/Achievements	Challenges/Opportunities
Educational priorities	Reduced enrollment (fluctuating)
STEAM experiences (K-12)	Discipline
Sec - Curricular Programs- revising offerings- focus on 21st-century learning	GW - Playground needs more age appropriate equipment
Facilities	Continuity across schools
Elem - Teacher's use of technology: Showcasing work to community-digital platforms; Instruction	RR- Performing Arts facilities / auditorium
Reputation	Mutual respect - Foster
Music & Arts	Incorporating civics into our curriculum
Technology integration	Transparency in several areas
GW - Ample laptops for students	Keeping students in District – (academics) (private magnet)
Programs for our special education and remedial students	Not enough balance between social skills and technology
Strong collaboration between/on teams at Ramapo Ridge Middle School	School start time
RR- Student Services Counselor	Security reasonable
Secondary - SEL-Wellness Course at the high school level	Special education / gifted and talented
Budget	Elementary - Streamlining and integrating digital programs? What is our priority?
Curriculum	HS - Media Learning Commons need to be updated
RR- Cycle Courses	Not enough balance between social skills and technology
GW - Sufficient Funding for Academic Programs	Meeting the needs of our kinesthetic learners (home economics) BOCES program (New York), fitting in opportunities (culinary arts program / family consumer arts)
Support	Non college-bound opportunities
JK- Makerspace Update	Transition to Middle School
Secondary - Curricular Programs- revising offerings- focus on 21st-century learning	Increasing class size
Educational priorities	HS - Performing Arts Facility
Support of the Arts (STEAM)	HS - Entrance lobby (upstairs) planter
Quality and commitment of educators	Fight grade inflation
Setting goals	Life skills
BR- Additional monitors	LM - Continuation of glass block wall in media center
Facility Improvement	Class sizes
HS - Teacher resources - instructional texts	Professional development: meeting needs of levels; differentiated for teachers; more opportunities to collaborate with other districts, teachers, and community
HS - 1:1 Laptop Initiative	LM - Improvements to staff restroom
RR- Room 109 - Life Skills Room	
RR- Modified 1:1 (7&8)	
AP programs and honors	
JK- Gameroom	

Strengths/Achievements	Challenges/Opportunities
Secondary - Struggling Learner work- RRMS: Analysis and communication of data for trends and learner profiles	HS - Enrollment in AP and Honors-Are we restricting?
RR- 3D Printers in physical science rooms	HS - Communication with parents and kids
GW - Promethean Boards in all homeroom/resource classrooms	RR- Extra Help Design (Before / After): Stipends and/or Transportation
GW - STEAM Lab/Makerspace	GW - Window Air Conditioning Units
BR- Flexible seating (grade 3)	RR- 3D printers in all science classes
Resources	LM - Maintenance of windows (Leaking in classrooms)
Community involvement	HS – Update access ramp
Stable faculty	Elementary - Vertical Articulation: 3-4; 5-6
Learned time management	Global/real-world experiences and connections
Commitment to well-being for students and staff: social emotional, mindfulness	HS - Preparation and Maintenance of fields/grounds on a daily, seasonal and annual basis. Numerous aspects.
Educators	Financial literacy
GW - Nature Center	HS - Differentiated Instruction
LM - Cafeteria with full kitchen	Incorporating civics into our curriculum
Communication	Sec - Reading/Writing and STEAM across the curriculum
GW - New PA system in APR	Financial literacy
Preparing students for new levels	Too much turnover of High School/Ramapo Ridge School staff
Literacy program	More guidance counselors K-12
College readiness	Elementary - In Class Differentiation: Support; G&T
Services	Expanding World Language choices
Students	JK - Evaluate Facility Use
Secondary - Commitment to Special Education services and programs	HS - Replacement of bleachers and coaches box on Stadium
LM - Ample classroom space/CST Suite	Students in the “middle” don't get lost
Dedication of teachers	JK - Evaluate Media Center Space
Parent support	Mental health
Secondary - Academic Accolades	BR- Teacher bathroom (north side of building)
MSF	Extra space (dedicated space for specific content)
JK- Quality large spaces (New Gym)	JK - Security System Updates (lobby guard)
Sec - Encore Courses- RRMS: Philosophy; New offerings 2019-2020	
LM - 2 technology labs	
GW - Funding for tutoring of at-risk students	
Having available counselors	

Strengths/Achievements	Challenges/Opportunities
Staff professional development and new hire support	Secondary - World Language: Explore ways to offer French and Spanish as a course, grades 6-8; Discuss with JK and Supervisor of World Languages re: vertical articulation / implications
Elementary - Specials Teachers are working on embedding cross-curricular connections	
Empathy	Keeping up with the times
RR- Courtyards	Elementary - In Class Differentiation: Support; G&T
Secondary - Student Services Counselor- RRMS: New position 2019-2020; New approaches to struggling learners	BR- Refurbish library
Secondary - ESS/Emotional Supports	Secondary - Professional Learning: Structuring available meeting times for sharing of best practices, exploring innovative pedagogies, and engaging turn-key professional development; Using available resources to lead professional learning opportunities especially (ESS, CST, school counselors, teachers, supervisors, etc.)
LM - Gymnasium with stage	
HS - Video green room	
Social emotional learning (K-8)	
HS - Man trap at entrance, greeter set up	JK - Single-paned windows
Staff professional development	Incorporating civics into our curriculum
Ramapo Ridge 1:1 (modified)	RR- Outdoor PE station/Recess area
Gifted and talented	LM - Additional phones in faculty lounge
Resources	*Continue to support teachers who struggle
Financial management	Bullying - address younger better supervision and guidance to identify occurrences
Gifted and talented	RR- Replace partition walls, i.e., 210-212, 400-402
RR- Student texts	Elem - Paras- How are we increasing their capacity?
Early identification/intervention - parent engagement	Community service and public outreach by students - problem solving
BR- Increased access to technology	"Urge to push students through" without meeting requirements
Student opportunities are diverse	Secondary - Vertical articulation / Transition grades 5-6 and 8-9; continued work
Staff	More teacher input
Child study team	Help bullied kids not don't bully
Teacher/staff	
Secondary - SEL-Wellness Course at the high school level	
Steam offerings	
Curriculum	
BR- Phones in classroom (cannot dial to the outside)	

Strengths/Achievements	Challenges/Opportunities
	Secondary - Student-Educator Relationship: Strengthening relationships between students and their teachers, counselors, case managers; connection and its impact on teaching and learning; Engaging families in their child's education; informing, supporting and communicating with families regarding their child's progress
	Secondary - Connections to Community: Showcasing instruction and programs; Providing context for programs as related to K-12 programming (for ex. Pathways feeders); Tapping into local resources to foster authentic, real world experiences related to curriculum
	Balancing technology
	Opportunities to connect with K-3 peers
	Gifted and talented begin younger than
	LM - Upgrades to fiberglass pillars outside of main entrance
	Support navigating from high school to college / career
	HS - Utilizing Community resources: Ramapo College
	Mental health education at an earlier age
	HS - Replace partition wall in 217/219
	Space needed K-3
	Lack of consistent grading difficulty, curriculum and teacher quality
	BR- Additional laptops for the classrooms
	More in house special tailored programming
	Clear communication of lockdown procedures balances safety versus fear
	HS - Services for disaffected students
	Stability in administration
	GW - Alternate Classroom Space for Special Education Services

The second strategic planning session is scheduled for:

Thursday, February 6, 2020 (snow date: February 27, 2020) from 6:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. at Joyce Kilmer School.

During the February 6 meeting, using a similar brainstorming process, we will identify our recommendations to the Superintendent that will be used to develop our long-range vision for the Mahwah Public Schools.

The final meeting will be held on Thursday, April 23 at 6:30 p.m. to craft goal statements using the input from the two previous sessions.

Please join us. Everyone is welcome, and can fully participate, even if you were not able to attend the first meeting. We look forward to seeing you!