



Creating a Strategic Plan for the Mount Arlington Public Schools

Mission Statement

To ensure that our children succeed personally, academically, socially, and physically. Through our commitment and passion to promote excellence, we will continue to provide our students with a safe, challenging, and inspiring learning environment so that each student may achieve his/her full potential. In partnership with the community, our students are provided with a sound foundation to support a lifelong journey of opportunity and success.

Session 1 - Strengths and Challenges/Opportunities of the Mount Arlington Public Schools, and a Shared Vision for the District Five Years from Now

On November 28, 2023 Mount Arlington Public Schools administrators, staff, Board members, parents, and community members came together to initiate strategic planning. The first evening's topics focused on the strengths and challenges/opportunities of the Mount Arlington Public Schools to help inform the question of where the district is now and to envision an ideal future five years from now.

Mount Arlington Board president Rachel Byrne opened the meeting. Monica Rowland, Superintendent, provided an informative overview of the district. Charlene Peterson and Kelly Mitchell, from New Jersey School Boards Association, introduced the strategic planning process and assisted throughout the small and large group work.

The participants gathered into five mixed stakeholder groups to brainstorm the strengths and challenges/opportunities of the Mount Arlington Public Schools. The groups were also asked to envision it is the year 2028 and they were giving a speech to all the top educators in the state to share why the district was being honored as the top district for advancing student achievement. They were asked to provide a title for the speech and to identify what was taking place in the district that caused this remarkable success.

After discussion, each group came to a consensus on their top strengths, challenges/opportunities, and five-year visionary ideas and presented those to the full group of meeting participants.

Summary of Small Group Work:

Group 1 – Speech Title: “Mount Arlington Empowers the Future Student

STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES/OPPORTUNITIES	VISIONS – YEAR 2028
Various extra-curricular activities	Class sizes - Decker	Students interact and communicate effectively in the classroom and in the real world.
Smooth operations – synergy and connections with Roxbury	Shared spaces/materials	Facilities upgrade and expansion (PreK)
Smaller district = stronger connections between staff, students, & parents	Transportation costs	Increased staff, smaller student-to-teacher ratio
Staff can see student growth from 3 rd to 8 th grade	Facilities (land to build upon)	More individualized instruction
Staff can easily communicate students needs from year to year – RTI, etc.	Teachers’ schedules maxed out – student needs	Increased our security (Resource officers, facility upgrades)
Shared services in town: DPW, town council, Rec, Fire Dept/Police Dept. Community support	Media specialists, Spec. Ed., Math, Nurse shortage	In-house transportation
	Differentiate for student demographics	Students are confident and willing to take risks
	Small district – limited access to services	Utilization of advanced educational technology
	Keep up with technology	Students have a strong mental health awareness (self and others)
	PreK availability to all kids	Resources available when needed for staff, students, and community members.

Group 2 – Speech Title – “We Hit it Out of the Ballpark”

STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES/OPPORTUNITIES	VISIONS – YEAR 2028
Public safety	Multilingual resources	Increased community involvement
Connection with community	Additional class space	State-of-the-art expanded classroom facilities
Individual care	Writing skills	Additional multilingual classes and staff
Innovative programs	Library resources (e-books)	Innovative STEM programs
PTO	AI control	Optimal individual success
Technology	Post-Covid social skills	Unlimited budget: resources, teachers, & faculty

Administration & faculty	Increase connection with seniors	
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Group 3 – Speech Title – “Mount Arlington – Excellence Unveiled”

STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES/OPPORTUNITIES	VISIONS – YEAR 2028
Inclusive environment	Space/physical room	State-of-the-art facilities and technology
Great staff	Special Ed costs 25% and ↑	Environmental literacy/MTA outdoor classroom
Strong community ties	Math achievement	Expanded 21 st Century course offerings
Smaller classes	1:1 Decker/Media tech.	Talent retention
ELA scores strong	Media Tech teacher (FT)	Improved and increased early intervention services
Collaborative relationship with Roxbury	Electives	Continued ELL support
Diversity	Aging facilities	Community inclusivity
Lake community/science value	Lake community/science opportunities	
Supportive BOE/Admin	Explore ICR models	
Extracurricular options for our size	Population changes	
	ELL support	
	Expanded arts/exposure	
	Grants/income	

Group 4 – Speech Title – “Mount Arlington Model”

STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES/OPPORTUNITIES	VISIONS – YEAR 2028
Dedicated, experienced staff	Changing/shifting demographics	Flexible learning spaces inside and out
Small community – supportive, rally, resourceful	Physical space limitations	Inclusive community: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Expanded special ed. programs ● Framework for diverse demographics
Close relationship with students/families	Special Education needs	Agile curriculum to incorporate advances in technology/new learning style
Multilingual learners bring new perspectives	Media/technology needs	Empathetic students who are productive critical thinkers
	Fast-paced changes (tech, AI, etc.) need to be addressed in instruction	Tight integration with Roxbury Ed.
	Maintaining exterior spaces	

Group 5 – Speech Title – “Mount Arlington’s Ultimate Vision”

STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES/OPPORTUNITIES	VISIONS – YEAR 2028
Parents/teachers	Space/building	Move middle school to Decker: 6-8. MAPS grades K-5
Community support	Schedule – K-5 & 6-8 th grades (A-E)	All Special Education programs in-house
Extra-curriculars	Team teacher with Special Ed.	More teachers/lunchroom aides
Board of Education	Rec programs	More extra-curriculars for K-5
Technology	Sub availability	Utilize sidewalks/“walkers” instead of “bussing” (crossing guards)
Public safety	Transportation cost	
Natural resources (lake)		

Please join us for our next meeting on Tuesday, December 5 at 7:00 pm to develop the roadmap – the goal statements and supporting objectives. All are welcome even if you did not attend the first meeting.