

# **Creating a Strategic Plan- Meeting #1 for the Tewksbury Township School District**

## **Mission Statement**

The mission of the Tewksbury School District is the continual development of each child's intellectual, artistic, social, and physical abilities in a positive environment, which fosters self-esteem and a love of learning while meeting the district expectation that they will achieve the New Jersey Student Learning Standards at all grade levels. Pupils in the Tewksbury Township Public Schools will be confident, productive members of a changing society.

## **Session 1**

### **What are the Strengths, Achievements and Challenges of the Tewksbury Township School District?**

On February 12, 2024, Tewksbury Township School District administrators, Board of Education members, staff, parents, and community members, fifty-two (52) in all came together to initiate strategic planning. The first evening focused on the strengths and challenges/opportunities of the Tewksbury Township School District. The meeting began with a welcome and introduction by Board President, Andrea Stein. The State of the Community Report was given by Jean Frankel and Andrea Maranca, Councilwomen and Jennifer Shouffler, Superintendent presented the current "State of the Schools" report. Facilitator Gwen Thornton, from New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA), was introduced and provided an overview of the strategic planning process.

We reviewed the consensus process utilized in strategic planning. The topic for the evening focused on identifying district strengths and challenges. Participants gathered in randomly assigned groups, six groups in total, and engaged in brainstorming the districts strengths and challenges. After group discussion, each group identified their consensus points, "Top 10" strengths and challenges, and presented those to the full group of meeting participants.

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

**Group Consensus: Strengths, Achievements & Challenges**

**Group #1:**

**Strengths**

Small class sizes  
Character development  
Mentoring program between older and younger kids  
Variety of after school programs  
Amazing involvement with police department  
Current blue ribbon standing  
High Academic achievements  
Encouraging, supportive environment (teachers and staff)  
Student/teacher ratio  
Own buses and employ drivers directly  
Food service

**Challenges/Opportunities**

Expanding mentoring programs at OTS  
Better utilize outdoor spaces for classes-more shade  
No track and field track  
Lack of lighting outdoor sports  
Parent involvement  
More student involvement with the community, especially seniors  
More history-based field strips  
More foreign language exposure  
Stronger civics education  
Pull back from technology dependency for students

**Group #2**

**Strengths**

Alternative secondary pathways  
Communication with schools  
After school/Lunch enrichment  
Childrens' relationships with broader school community(police, bus drivers)

**Group 2**

**Challenges/Opportunities**

Stem Enrichment  
Financial Literacy, increased involvement with parents for enrichment

## ***Tewksbury Township I District Strategic Planning Meeting #1 Outcomes***

Defining “success” for students beyond state test  
Sustainability within the district  
Geometry classes (access to advanced classes)  
Stage at OTS  
Classroom design-modernize classrooms  
SEL opportunities (post-covid)

### **Group #3:**

#### **Strengths**

Small class size/teacher to student ratio  
Dedicated teachers, especially special education teachers’ commitment and quality  
Diversity of non-athletic clubs  
Guidance/school counselor/S and E at TES programs  
Packs and Dens  
Schoolwide enrichment at TES  
Bus drivers  
STEM- bridge building  
Parent speaker series  
Social Media night  
Tech free Fridays at OTS encourages social interaction

#### **Challenges/Opportunities**

Stop sugar coating behavior issues at TES and formulate/implement a plan for escalation and reporting, etc.  
Special education is understaffed and under supported  
Treat giftedness as a special need; understand and comply full with state gifted law; identification in Kindergarten  
OTS start time- make it later  
Reduce reliance on screens  
More non-athletic clubs  
More OTS recess and/or fresh air time  
Science fair, spelling bees, model UN, debate club-engage with other districts  
Bring together ASPIRE parents like SEPAC

### **Group #4:**

#### **Strengths**

Small class size  
Approachable teachers  
Willingness to attend to the needs of the students  
Academic rigor (algebra)

## ***Tewksbury Township I District Strategic Planning Meeting #1 Outcomes***

World language program  
Involved administration  
Access to digital resources (programs and laptops)  
Bussing – our drivers!  
Police presence, security  
Non-athletic clubs/ eighth grade experience

### **Challenges/Opportunities**

Greater special education program  
Increase parent engagement  
Add after school program staff (teachers and parents)  
Food- price/quality  
Discipline (limited)  
Stage appearance OTS  
Outdoor space and playground  
Teacher recruitment/retention  
After Care/After School bussing for late/sport bus route  
TES/OTS interactions, partnering i.e., fifth grade transition, summer camps

### **Group #5 : :**

#### **Strengths**

Financial independence- in charge of our own destiny  
Wait list for receiving out of district students  
Capacity for more students  
Small class sizes  
Supportive community  
Small community  
Happy Kids  
Students are well known to teachers  
Sports  
Band

#### **Challenges/Opportunities**

Lack of science fairs  
Lack of G and T, honors  
Identify exceptional students  
Equal alerts to residents without children in school  
Frequency and variety of world languages  
Compare scores of students from other sending districts

## ***Tewksbury Township I District Strategic Planning Meeting #1 Outcomes***

Field Trips outside the community  
Facility management- only at 60% capacity  
Social media

### **Group #6 :**

#### **Strengths**

Teacher retention  
Small class size  
School is part of a larger community  
PTA created activities brings people together especially new families  
TEF and other community groups  
Community helpers' involvement in our schools  
Overall kindness of our kids  
Principals are top notch  
Sheila Donovan and the other TES support services  
Dens@TES foster friendships across grades

#### **Challenges/Opportunities**

More trade programs. Not all students need college/academic track. Bring back woodshop, hands on skills-genius hour  
Too much testing in younger grades  
Embrace the Arts  
Too much chrome books-brain break is a video  
Media Literacy-be savvy consumers of media  
Community with community and taxpayers

Following each group reporting out on their consensus points, among all of the groups there were many **common themes**:

#### **Strengths:**

Small, close supportive community  
Dedicated staff and administration  
Academic rigor  
Access to digital resources/technology  
Students are known, valued, and heard  
PTA, and other community organizations are highly supportive

***Tewksbury Township I District Strategic Planning Meeting #1 Outcomes***

Principals are top-notch

Police presence/ buses and bus drivers

Co-curricular program and athletics

World language program

Small Class Size(s)

Teacher/Student ratio

**Challenges/Opportunities:**

Teacher recruitment/retention

Facilities-outdoor spaces, utilization management and updates/upgrades

G and T, special education needs

Expansion of enrichment and co-curricular programs

Expanding communication and outreach to the community

Expansion of hands-on and experiential learning

Space for enrichment programming and activities

Social media/screen time

Multiple measures of student success

**The second strategic planning session is scheduled for:**

**Wednesday, March 13, 2024, at 7:00 pm,**

Meetings are scheduled for 1.5 hours. Meetings start and end promptly.

During the March 13<sup>th</sup> meeting we will create a shared vision together for the future of the – Tewksbury Township School District . . . we will talk about our aspirations and expectations for our students and school district.

Please join us. Bring a friend! Everyone is welcome! We look forward to seeing you!