

# 3D Strategic Plan

2023 - 2028

Strategic Plan  
Executive Summary

Prepared for the

## Wharton Borough Public Schools

Facilitated by:  
Charlene Peterson, Field Service Representative



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

# 3D Strategic Plan

**Wharton Borough Public Schools**

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Wharton Borough Public Schools' Strategic Planning process, completed during the 2022-23 academic year, could not have occurred without the support, cooperation and dedication of the following people and groups:

## **2023 Wharton Borough Board of Education**

Robin Ghebreal, President

Jennifer Hobbs, Vice-President

Anthony Astrologo

Gilbert Bahr

Satwant Banga

Paul Breda

Kelly Elardo

Christopher J. Herdman, Superintendent  
Sandy Cammarata, Business Administrator/Board Secretary

## **Staff, Parents, and Community Members**

Thank you for your input, participation, and support.

## **New Jersey School Boards Association**

Charlene Peterson, Field Service Representative

# 3D STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

## Executive Summary

### **A. Strategic Planning Development**

New Jersey School Boards Association provided information to the Board of Education on the process to begin strategic planning.

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

- commitment of time and resources
- school and community level involvement
- strategic planning to meet the needs of the district
- potential participants to be included in the process

In 2022 the Board contracted with NJSBA for these services.

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

On December 14, 2022 and March 23, 2023 Charlene Peterson, Field Service Representative, facilitated two Strategic Planning meetings. Outcomes of these meetings include:

1. District Strengths and Challenges/Opportunities,
2. The vision of the future for the district five years from now
3. Goals and Objectives

Outcomes from the Strategic Planning Meetings are included in Appendix B.

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

The Superintendent and administrative team/staff will develop action plans to implement the 3D Strategic Plan. The action plans will include:

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

# MISSION STATEMENT

## Mission Statement

*Learn to thrive in a  
dynamic world.*



# GOAL AREAS

The three goal areas that emerged as common threads from the group's work are:

- 1. Continued Academic Improvement**
- 2. Operations**
- 3. Culture, Climate, and Communication**

# GOAL AREA # 1

## Continued Academic Improvement

### Goal Statement:

To create ways to increase the development opportunities for all staff in social-emotional needs and instructional practices.

### Objectives:

1. Offer opportunities to build the capacity for teachers in their educational knowledge and instructional practices, including areas related to bilingual instruction.
2. Provide professional opportunities and professional development for support staff members.
3. Expand extracurricular opportunities that include additional sports options and academic club options that include leadership roles.
4. Consider new areas to offer honors criteria for students with advanced skills in non-core curriculum content areas.
5. Leadership opportunities for middle school students related to community relationships with community service hours.

# GOAL AREA # 2

## Operations

### Goal Statement:

**Maintain a safe and healthy environment for all students.**

### Objectives:

1. Ensure appropriate classroom space for all students.
2. Maintain and upgrade building security as needed.
3. Collaborate with the town on the upkeep of the back parking lot.
4. Maintain cleanliness of the facility.
5. Maintain and upgrade technology as needed.
6. Increase cybersecurity as needed.



# **GOAL AREA # 3**

## **Culture, Climate, and Communication**

### **Goal Statement:**

**Wharton Borough Schools are a learning community where students, staff, and families are supported and connected, every student feels valued and values their education, and sees hope and meaning in their future.**

### **Objectives:**

1. Ongoing focus on identifying, recognizing, and accommodating the unique learning styles of each student.
2. Parents understand and support at home the academic expectations of their students, regardless of when the student was enrolled during the school year.
3. Parents and students are comfortable asking for, and know where to get, assistance for non-academic, social, and emotional support when they need it.

# **Appendix "A"**

## **State-of-the-District Report**

# Wharton Borough Public School District

Strategic Planning 2022-2023



Learn to Thrive In a Dynamic World



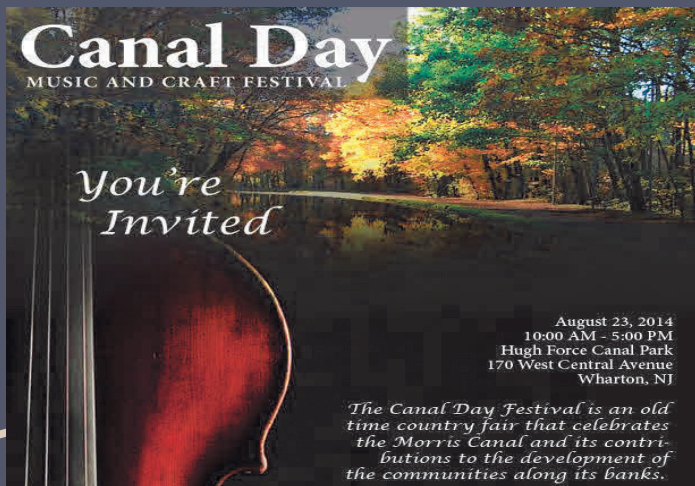
The Wharton Borough School District is a “Choice” district serving approximately 700 students in two schools. The district has a PreK - 5 grade elementary school, with full-day Kindergarten, and one middle school, housing grades 6-8.

## Wharton Borough History

Wharton was originally incorporated as the borough of Port Oram by an act of a New Jersey Legislator on June 26, 1895, created from portions of Randolph Township and Rockaway Township.

The name was changed to Wharton on April 16, 1902. The borough was named for Joseph Wharton of Wharton Steel Company in 1902. Wharton also endowed the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania.

## Wharton Borough History

A poster for the Canal Day Music and Craft Festival. The background features a scenic view of a canal with trees showing autumn foliage. In the foreground, the neck and body of a violin are visible. The text on the poster includes the festival name, an invitation, and event details.

**Canal Day**  
MUSIC AND CRAFT FESTIVAL

*You're Invited*

August 23, 2014  
10:00 AM - 5:00 PM  
Hugh Force Canal Park  
170 West Central Avenue  
Wharton, NJ

*The Canal Day Festival is an old time country fair that celebrates the Morris Canal and its contributions to the development of the communities along its banks.*

The Canal Day Festival is an old time country fair that celebrates the Morris Canal and its contributions to the development of the communities along its banks.

## Wharton Borough History

MAIN STREET WHARTON WAS USED AS THE FILMING LOCATION FOR CYNDI LAUPER'S MUSIC VIDEO "TIME AFTER TIME" IN 1984



## Wharton Borough History

Kirk Alyn

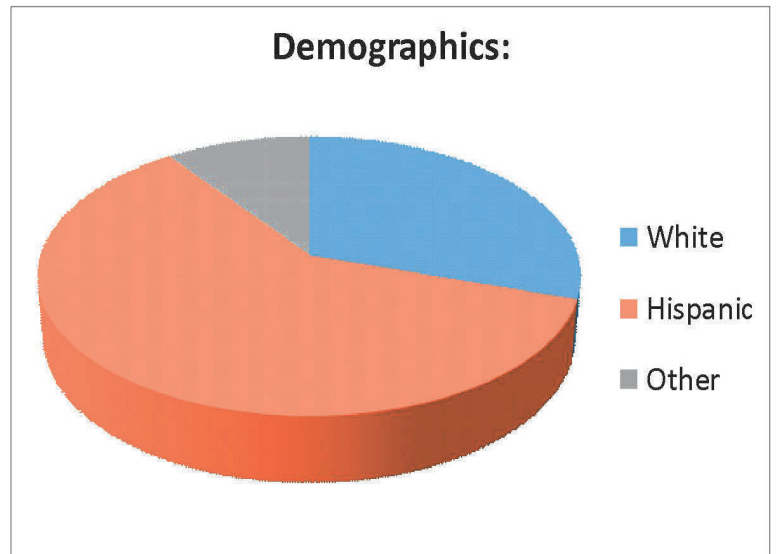


Alyn playing his role as *Superman* in the film serial.

Kirk Alyn (1910-2000), the first on-screen Superman, was born in Wharton.

# Wharton Borough Community

- ★ ≈ 6,500 Residents
- ★ 2,304 Households
- ★ 1,590 Families
- ★ 2,426 Housing Units\*



## District Goals:

To increase student achievement by implementing rigorous programs and activities through advanced technology, creating innovators and self-directed learners to thrive in a dynamic world.

To create a positive, open, and productive environment of respect and resilience that empowers the students and the community.

Maintain a fiscally sound budget and improve facilities while having a positive impact on the students and community.



## Curricular/ Professional Development Highlights

- Multi-Tiered System of Supports
- Readers/Writers Workshop
- Foundations: New Elementary Program
- Advanced ELA and Math Programs in the Middle School

## Curricular/ Professional Development Highlights

- Online and “In-Person” professional development opportunities
- Professional Development HUB
- Teachers as Experts
- Area Partners

## Extracurricular Highlights:

- ★ Wide offering of interscholastic athletic programs in the middle school
- ★ Performing Arts and Instrumental Music programs
- ★ Family Evening Programs
- ★ Math and Science Academies
- ★ Parent ESL program
- ★ Student Government
- ★ Duffy Force
- ★ Numerous after school clubs (Tech, Art, Yearbook, etc.)

## Partnerships



- Regular/Scheduled articulation with our regional partners in all contents
- Shared Services
- Municipal Alliance
- PTA
- Wharton Kids First Foundation



## Partnerships



- SAGE/Thrive
- PreK Grant
- Student Health Care Services and Staff Professional Development agreement with St. Claire's
- Shared Transportation Services

## Recent Noteworthy Successes

- ★ Met all "Growth Targets" on 2022 State assessment
- ★ Implemented district wide internal benchmarking practice
- ★ Instituted a model MTSS program
- ★ Successfully completed the QSAC process
- ★ Awarded title "High Performing School District" by the State
- ★ Pandemic Successes: One of few schools that offered full day internal instruction

# Accomplishments:

- ❑ Met Growth Targets
- ❑ Navigated pandemic
- ❑ Named High Performing School District
- ❑ Mental Health services
- ❑ Expanded our technological capabilities (9+, 1:1, Promethean)
- ❑ Additions to administrative team
- ❑ Sound/Alert systems throughout the district
- ❑ New security cameras throughout district
- ❑ Numerous security upgrades (vestibules, doors, etc)
- ❑ Class III Officer
- ❑ New air conditioning in both schools
- ❑ New and/or updated roofing on facility

## “Things to consider.....”

Two items I ask you keep in mind while participating and contributing to the strategic plan.



“How can you care about anything, when you know every goddamn thing?” - Dave Chappelle

This group tells a story.....

[https://youtu.be/R\\_YC6jiDZGI](https://youtu.be/R_YC6jiDZGI)

<https://youtu.be/7H3JuQUOTLQ>

<https://youtu.be/DyjmHzYfmWE>

# **Appendix “B”**

## **Outcomes of Meetings 1 and 2**

- 1. Strengths/Challenges**
- 2. Visions/Goal Areas**
- 3. Goal Statements**



## **Session 1 - Strengths and Challenges/Opportunities of the Wharton Borough Public Schools, and a Shared Vision for the District Five Years from Now**

On December 14, 2022 Wharton Borough administrators, staff, Board members, parents, community members, and students came together to initiate strategic planning. The first evening's topics focused on the strengths and challenges/opportunities of the Wharton Borough Public Schools to help inform the question of where the district is now and to envision an ideal future five years from now.

The Wharton Borough Board of Education opened the meeting. Christopher Herdman, Superintendent, provided an informative overview of the district. Charlene Peterson, from New Jersey School Boards Association, introduced the strategic planning process and assisted throughout the small and large group work.

The participants gathered into three mixed stakeholder groups to brainstorm the strengths and challenges/opportunities of the Wharton Borough Public Schools. The groups were also asked to pretend it is the year 2028 and they were giving a speech to all the top educators in the state to share the visionary reasons why the district was being awarded 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. The student participants rotated among the three groups to share their unique insights.

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.

The information that follows is a summary of the work of the small groups. All consensus points may be posted on the district's website.



**Group 1 – Speech Title: “Community Partnerships to Value Every Child”**

| <b>STRENGTHS</b>  | <b>CHALLENGES/OPPORTUNITIES</b>  | <b>VISIONS – YEAR 2028</b>  |
|---|--|---|
| Quality teaching – teachers effective in responding to needs of each student  | Parental involvement and engagement are low – poor response to strategic planning  | We’ve met the challenges of changing demographics and town development in concert with the town and community partners, resulting in student assimilation and appreciation for a diverse community. |
| Community diversity – makes our community stronger  | Impact of aging demographics and new development in town will lead to expanding enrollment. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aging homeowner will be selling homes to new families</li> <li>• From new developments: expect approx. 500 additional housing units in the next 4 years.</li> </ul> | Development of the school grounds and facilities for wider, more versatile use.   |
| Instructional technology – our investments are used well  | Acclimating, and serving the needs of, recent immigrants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English as a second language</li> <li>• Understanding and participating in the education system</li> </ul>   |   |
| Town plans for growth include quality of life efforts, including more and expanded parks, safe walking routes to school | Teacher shortage – students note the lack of consistency in class resulting from lack of long-term substitutes covering teacher leaves   |   |
|   | Student engagement – student note a lack of classroom participation, and disinterest in after-school activities. Is this a result of the pandemic?   |   |



**Group 2 – Speech Title – “Sense of Community”**

| <b>STRENGTHS</b>                 | <b>CHALLENGES/OPPORTUNITIES</b>                     | <b>VISIONS – YEAR 2028</b>                |
|----------------------------------|---|---|
| Manageable workload - student    | Follow-up on backing up from commitment by students | Intrinsically motivated students          |
| Students have voice in classroom | Staffing – teachers/subs/aides                      | Environmentally aware student community   |
| Dedicated and caring staff       | Involving more parents                              | More opportunities for bilingual students |
| Great administration             | Parent concerns - transportation                    |   |
| Great art program                | Mail info to parent                                 |   |
| Parent liaison                   |   |   |
| Facilities                       |   |   |
| Technology                       |   |   |
| After school programs            |   |   |
| Great support staff              |   |   |

**Group 3 – Speech Title – “Choice and Voice”**

| <b>STRENGTHS</b>  | <b>CHALLENGES/ OPPORTUNITIES</b>                                       | <b>VISIONS – YEAR 2028</b>                                    |
|---|--|---|
| Diversity   | Continuous cultivations of empathy/flexibility/SEL                     | Safe, inviting, up-to-date building                           |
| Teaching staff  | Divergent needs  | More electives, choices, pathways                             |
| Trust   | Funding limitations  | Alternative electives – industrial, vo-tech, shop, work force |
| Commitment to improvement   | Staffing/cost  | Representative staff/Board/ involvement                       |
| Valuing all stakeholders – students, Duffy Force                              | State mandates   | Culturally responsive celebration of diversity                |
| Community relations/ partnerships   | Inflation  | Empathetic/flexible teachers                                  |
| Sense of community - PTA  | Schedule - electives   | Relevant technology   |
| Empathy - SEL   |  |   |
| <i>Student input:</i>   | <i>Student input:</i>  |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New technology</li> </ul>            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More student voice</li> </ul> |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extracurriculars/sports</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More clubs/surveys</li> </ul> |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comfortable with teachers</li> </ul> |  |   |



## Developing a Broad Goal Statement and Supporting Objectives for Each Goal Area

On March 23, 2023 Wharton Borough parents, board members, staff, administration, and community members came together to continue the strategic planning process. This meeting focused on the development of a broad goal statement and four or so supporting objectives for each of the goal areas. These goals will represent a shared vision for the Wharton Borough Public Schools over the next five years.

The Board opened its public meeting and then turned it over to Charlene Peterson from New Jersey School Boards Association to facilitate the strategic planning process. The group was provided with an overview of the December 14, 2022 meeting outcomes and then the goal writing process was introduced that included the connection to the work from the first meeting, the survey results, and the components of a goal statement.

Participants were divided into three breakout groups – one group per each goal area:

- Continued Academic Improvement
- Operations
- Culture, Climate, & Communication

Each goal area group was tasked with writing a broad goal statement and developing accompanying objectives that reflected the strengths, challenges, and visions relative to their goal area as determined in the December meeting and the survey results.

The information that follows is a summary of the work of the small groups. All consensus points may be posted on the district’s website.

| Goal Area      | Continued Academic Improvement  |
|----------------|---|
| Goal Statement | To create ways to increase the development opportunities for all staff in social-emotional needs and instructional practices.   |
| Objectives     | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Offer opportunities to build the capacity for teachers in their educational knowledge and instructional practices, including areas related to bilingual instructions.</li><li>2. Provide professional opportunities and professional development for support staff members.</li><li>3. Expand extra-curricular opportunities that include additional sport options and academic club options that include leadership roles.</li><li>4. Consider new areas to offer honors criteria for students with advanced skills in non-core curriculum content areas.</li><li>5. Leadership opportunities for middle school students related to community relationships with community service hours.</li></ol> |





|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>Goal Area</b>      | <b>Operations</b>   |
| <b>Goal Statement</b> | Maintain a safe and healthy environment for all students.   |
| <b>Objectives</b>     | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ensure appropriate classroom space for all students.</li> <li>2. Maintain and upgrade building security as needed.</li> <li>3. Collaborate with town on the upkeep of the back parking lot.</li> <li>4. Maintain cleanliness of the facility.</li> <li>5. Maintain and upgrade technology as needed.</li> <li>6. Increase cybersecurity as needed.</li> </ol> |

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>Goal Area</b>      | <b>Culture, Climate, and Communication</b>   |
| <b>Goal Statement</b> | Wharton Borough Schools are a learning community where students, staff, and families are supported and connected, every student feels valued and values their education, and sees hope and meaning in their future.  |
| <b>Objectives</b>     | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ongoing focus on identifying, recognizing, and accommodating the unique learning styles of each student.</li> <li>2. Parents understand and support at home the academic expectations of their students, regardless of when the student was enrolled during the school year.</li> <li>3. Parents and students are comfortable asking for, and know where to get, assistance for non-academic, social and emotion support when they need it.</li> </ol> |

### Next Steps

The administration/staff is tasked with writing action plans that will identify the specific steps needed to accomplish the goals/objectives, who is responsible, the resources needed, the timeline over a five-year time span, and the indicators of success.



# Appendix "C"

## Survey



**WHARTON BOROUGH PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
137 East Central Avenue  
Wharton, NJ 07885-2499

**Christopher Herdman**  
Superintendent

**Telephone:** 973.361.2592  
**Fax:** 973.361.4805

**M E M O R A N D U M**

**TO:** DISTRICT PARENTS  
**FROM:** C. HERDMAN  
**DATE:** DECEMBER 21, 2022  
**RE:** STRATEGIC PLANNING

The District is in the process of setting our strategic priorities for the next five years, and are looking for parent input. If you are willing to help, please take this form home and fill it out. You can either return it with your child to school, or email your answers to [mobiedzinski@wbps.org](mailto:mobiedzinski@wbps.org).

What three things do you like best about Wharton Schools?

What three things would you like to see improved about Wharton Schools?

What future challenges do you expect Wharton Schools to face?

Any additional comments or information you would like to share?

## Wharton Strategic Planning Survey Responses

*\* Indicates response was received several times.*

### **What do you like most about the Wharton Schools?**

The commitment and respect towards the students, the safety of the school.

Great teachers.\*

Their strategies for learning and their commitment to each student.

Communication.\*

They stay on top of bullying issues

Academics

Diversity\*

When I was worried that my daughter would be transferred to special education. They didn't just ignore me and tell me I didn't know what I was talking about.

Accessibility to staff and administrators.\*

Small community, supportive school staff and development program. After school programs are wonderful.

Small community. The size of the classrooms compared to the ratio of teachers.

Everything we have experienced.

Administrators.\*

The overall organization and different activities for the benefit of students.

Students can excel.

The responsibility they take.

Inclusion\*

How hard the school works.

Special days for children such as the day to dress up as their favorite book character.

### **What are things you would like to see improved at Wharton Schools?**

Cafeteria/food.\*

More up to date/easier to navigate website

More activities for children to bond.

Cleanliness of bathrooms and trash outside of the building that blows around.

More communication from athletic coaches about game and practice schedules.

More communication at the middle school level. Parents are not used to the Parent Portal and seem unaware of dates because they are shared through the Parent Portal, Google etc. While the parent portal and Google are great tools, parents are still not used to these communication vehicles.

Children lack many basic skills (life skills) that older generations learned in schools. It would be great to see some kind of home economics class.

Too many half days. Would be better with full days off.

More technology, longer lunch period, better communication of activities.

Fewer children per classroom.

It would be interesting to set up work groups between students and teachers in order to find new methods and ways to improve learning.

Learning beyond subject knowledge.

Nothing at this point.\*

More clubs or activities for younger children. Especially to interact with older children. Technology is taking over and kids don't communicate well in person these days, something where they do that.

### **What future challenges do you expect Wharton Schools to face?**

Out-of-town students attending our school illegally.

Position itself as one of the best schools in the area.

Everything is fine.\*

Increased population with new housing developments and apartments.\*

I'm not sure.\*

More programs for community integration.

There is a large LGBTQ community within the schools, especially at the middle school level, outside programs like the edge are able to speak to staff, children, and parents and offer talks. Wharton already supports this community, but educational programs can help understand some of the challenges everyone faces.

Keeping LBGTQ away from the schools and curriculum.

This generation requires flexibility in teaching and finding new ways of learning to make them attractive to students.

Technology is taking over

### **Any additional comments or information you would like to share?**

None\*

More activities for parents and children together

Retain and attract good teachers

have been very grateful for the education and support my children received through the Wharton schools.

Thank you for being such a supportive school district.

I am very happy with the education this school has provided.\*

Lunch should be healthier/better.\*

In general, it is a very good team that has been formed at the school and I personally congratulate the teachers and administration for their great work.

Keep up the good work. My youngest daughter entered school with a poor educational foundation due to covid closures. She is having a great year and her reading is improving by the day.