



# SOUTH AMBOY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## FIVE YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

(July 2024 – June 2029)

*“Empowering Today’s Learners to Become Tomorrow’s Leaders”*

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# STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

## Strategic Planning Steering Committee Members

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Sean Dunphy, Elementary School Principal

Michelle Buchanan, Elementary School Vice Principal

James Brown, Middle/High School Principal

Erin Lamberson, Middle/High School Vice Principal

Ja'mon Dunn, Athletic Director

### Staff

### Students

### Parent/Guardian and Community Members

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Cathy Housman  
Jessica Kramer-Teheran  
Roberlandy Lescano  
Marcia Mercado  
Gina Martinez  
Anna Mae O'Connor  
Kelsey Oliver  
Brielle Sanders  
Diane Smocovich  
Lauren Strumwasser  
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Zoey Mercado  
Antonella Mori  
Dominik Pawlus  
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Anthony Conrad  
Georgine Exyloius  
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Dan Johnson  
Ana Yvette Moreira  
Shephaly Phillips  
Nadine Savoia

# DISTRICT NARRATIVE

South Amboy Public Schools is dedicated to providing each student with an academic program that challenges and encourages high expectations for learning. Our elementary school is configured grades PreK-5 and the South Amboy Middle/High School serves students from grades 6 to 12. With over 1150 students district-wide, our diverse student population continues to grow. Our student demographics include 45.3% Hispanic, 37.1% White, 9.5% Black/African American, 3.7% Asian, 4.4% other. We also provide high quality education to just under fifty-three percent (52.6%) economically disadvantaged (Free or Reduced Lunch) and 6.6% Multi-Language Learners in our schools.

## **Curriculum and Instruction**

Curriculum and Instruction is at the heart of educational achievement. It is our collective goal to unite core academic subjects, interdisciplinary themes and essential skills with an integrative approach to instruction that includes modern pedagogies, technology, resources and contexts working together to prepare our students for the real world and its rigorous requirements. Teachers develop instructional strategies to assist students in becoming active learners. Our district has adopted nationally recognized programs to challenge all students. Ready Math (iReady), Tools of the Mind, and Fountas & Pinnell Classroom are just a few examples.

The process of curriculum revision, instruction and assessment ensures that all students receive the most up-to-date instruction necessary to align with the knowledge and skills needed by all students to be successful in post-secondary opportunities, four-year colleges, community colleges, technical training institutions, military service, direct entry into the workplace, and an array of future careers.

## **Pupil Personnel Services**

Another integral aspect of our educational system is the Pupil Personnel Services department. This department focuses on serving the educational and socio emotional needs of students with IEP's and 504's. Within the past two years, the department has worked on several exciting initiatives. Wish (Work, Inspire, Shine, Hope) is our Community Based Instruction Program (CBI) Students between the ages of 14 -18 in our Multiple Disabilities Program have been going to various community stores, restaurants and recreation centers to experience different possible opportunities for future employment. For students 18 and older we have created the World (Working on real life Dreams) with the support of a newly hired South Amboy Transition coordinator we have students working in real life local community stores.

At the elementary school we have been enriching our preschool disabled program with consistent professional development and coaching on best practices in Applied Behavior Analysis. This department has also used the integration of technology to support instruction and maximize student achievement across all curricular areas and at all grade levels. Smartboards, iPads, laptops, and educational software programs are used within the Special Education Department to maximize student engagement and learning, and to improve academic skills.

All students have access to support staff that include counselors at the elementary and middle/high school levels. While our elementary and middle school students learn important social skills and individual competencies, our high school students establish graduation and career plans. The

counseling staff continues to work with community agencies to help at-risk youth through the support of our student assistance counselor (SAC) and nursing staff. Our schools utilize the Second Step Learning program to educate students and fully address the social and emotional needs of our students and staff to embed appropriate activities throughout the school year.

### **Community Partnerships**

We have an active PTO that serves the entire school district. With representatives from both schools, our PTO works collaboratively to address the needs of all students. Their fundraising efforts have provided many resources such as specialty classroom resources used by teachers to provide instruction in a creative way and a television studio, to name a few. At the Elementary School, class parents work as liaisons with the PTO to disseminate information and support teachers throughout the school year. Some of the notable events sponsored by the PTO include: Fun Run, Elementary and Middle School Fun Day, Pocketbook Bingo, and various dances/socials throughout the year.

### **Technology**

As technology continues to expand, we strive to stay as up to date and current as possible. To help achieve this, we have installed interactive displays with tablets in both our schools in order to facilitate teaching and keep the students engaged in their education. We continue to invest in our 1:1 Chromebook initiative by supplying every student, grades 4-12 with a device they can take home. We continue to upgrade the devices in Pre-K to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade with classroom sets to ensure continuity. In today's internet heavy learning, we continue to improve our infrastructure in order to prevent any disruptions in digital education while also ensuring the digital safety of all staff and students. Informational displays have also been installed throughout the district in order to keep students up to date in current school events.

### **Recent Upgrades**

Finally, the following are some of the more recent academic programs that South Amboy has instituted which provide our students and staff with the necessary skills and tools to prepare for the state standardized assessments based on the New Jersey Student Learning Standards. These student and staff programs are as follows:

- Expansion of our preschool programming to include over 90 three-year old and four-year old students.
- Expansion of tutoring programs in grades 3-8 that aid students in the skill building required to improve performance on state standardized tests.
- LinkIt and iReady Benchmark assessments administered to students in grades 3 through 11 that relate to the mastery of standards at each grade level.
- Curriculum revision, alignment, and mapping that correlate with the most recent New Jersey Student Learning Standards.
- Expansion of Technology Access and Integration at all grade levels
- Sustained & job-embedded professional development for all faculty.

# STRATEGIC PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The strategic plan development process began on October 31, 2023 with a survey sent to all school community partners. The survey, which was sent to students, parent/guardians, staff, and community partners, had a total of forty-five (45) responses. On January 10, 2024 emails were shared with the individuals who responded to the initial October 31, 2023 survey to gauge their interest in serving on the Strategic Planning Committee, as well as to obtain parental/guardian permission for our scholars to participate.

On January 18, 2024 during the monthly Instructional Leadership Team meeting, the administrative team met to review the vision and mission statement of the district and to create the subcommittees for the Strategic Plan. The administrative team discussed the top choices at length and composed the final subcommittees of Teaching and Learning, Resource Management, Community Engagement and Collaboration, and Culture and Climate. In addition, the team reviewed the participants who confirmed their participation received from the students, parent/guardians, staff, and community partner participation surveys to create the groups for each of the four focus areas for the strategic plan.

On January 30, 2024, the first of three steering committee meetings was held with forty-six (46) individuals representing board members, administrators, staff, parents/guardians, students and members of the community. The group was divided into four committees each working on one of the identified focus areas. Over the two months, the steering committees developed goals, action steps, and timelines for the implementation of the plan.

The following represents all of the meetings coordinated during the development process:

## **Schedule of Meetings:**

<b>1/18/2024</b>	<b>Administrative Team Initial Meeting</b>
<b>1/29/2024</b>	<b>Administrative Team Planning Meeting</b>
<b>1/30/2024</b>	<b>Strategic Planning Full Team Meeting</b>
<b>2/6/2024</b>	<b>Strategic Planning Committee Meetings</b>
<b>2/13/2024</b>	<b>Strategic Planning Committee Meetings</b>
<b>2/27/2024</b>	<b>Strategic Planning Full Team Meeting</b>
<b>3/21/2024</b>	<b>Administrative Team Review Meeting</b>
<b>3/26/2024</b>	<b>Strategic Planning Full Team Meeting</b>
<b>5/28/2024</b>	<b>Board of Education Meeting</b>



## VISION STATEMENT

Empowering Today's Learners to Become Tomorrow's Leaders

## MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the South Amboy School District is to educate and empower today's learners to develop intellectually, emotionally, and socially as tomorrow's leaders within a diverse community of supportive and committed educators, parents, and citizens.

## 2024 – 2029 FOCUS AREAS & BELIEF STATEMENTS

### *Focus Area #1: Teaching and Learning*

We believe in creating a myriad of authentic and real-life learning experiences for the school community, empowering instructional staff to strengthen academic rigor thus establishing strong self-sufficient lifelong learners of the South Amboy Public School District.

### *Focus Area #2: Resource Management*

We believe in maintaining and enhancing our facilities and digital infrastructure to support our students and staff in a safe and secure learning environment.

### *Focus Area #3: Community Engagement*

We believe in cultivating a vibrant and engaged community where members collaborate effectively towards building a diverse, equitable, and inclusive school environment.

### *Focus Area #4: Culture and Climate*

We believe in fostering, promoting, and modeling positive student interaction and healthy lifestyles.



### *Focus Area #1: Teaching and Learning*

We believe in creating a myriad of authentic and real-life learning experiences for the school community, empowering instructional staff to strengthen academic rigor thus establishing strong self-sufficient lifelong learners of the South Amboy Public School District.

**Goal 1:** The South Amboy Public Schools will expand and integrate opportunities for experiential, hands-on, and meaningful learning experiences and programs whether through clubs or course offerings designed to foster learning outside of the traditional classroom.

**Goal 2:** Engage local colleges and professional associations to empower teachers to improve instructional practices, promote student engagement and achievement, and support the implementation of teaching strategies.

### *Focus Area #2: Resource Management*

We believe in maintaining and enhancing our facilities and digital infrastructure to support our students and staff in a safe and secure learning environment.

**Goal 1:** Create innovative spaces to promote learning that prepares children for their future and the education of the whole child.

**Goal 2:** Maintain and upgrade facilities through green and sustainable solutions.

**Goal 3:** Enhance District Security and Efficiency through Comprehensive Technology and Infrastructure Upgrades

### *Focus Area #3: Community Engagement*

We believe in cultivating a vibrant and engaged community where members collaborate effectively towards building a diverse, equitable, and inclusive school environment.

**Goal 1:** Establish channels for open communication among community members, and ensure these platforms are inclusive and welcoming to all voices.

**Goal 2:** Provide resources, training, and mentorship to empower community members to take action and contribute effectively.

### *Focus Area #4: Culture and Climate*

We believe in fostering, promoting, and modeling positive student interaction and healthy lifestyles.

**Goal 1:** Build a system for the development and support for culture and climate where South Amboy students, staff, and community can thrive.

**Goal 2:** Strengthen relationships and communication, so we can foster a culture of collaboration, trust, and open communication within South Amboy Public Schools.

## Focus Area: Teaching and Learning

**Belief Statement:** We believe in creating a myriad of authentic and real-life learning experiences for the school community, empowering instructional staff to strengthen academic rigor thus establishing strong self-sufficient lifelong learners of the South Amboy Public School District.

**Goal #1:** The South Amboy Public Schools will expand and integrate opportunities for experiential, hands-on, and meaningful learning experiences and programs whether through clubs or course offerings designed to foster learning outside of the traditional classroom.

- Action Steps
  - Survey stakeholders to gauge interest (tv studio, esports, dance, creative arts, home economics, etc.)
  - Create clubs to engage in interactive and academically stimulating play with scholars from different schools/organizations. (Esports, etc.)
  - Create at least two new standing clubs as a result of survey (Dance, Arts, TV Studio, etc.)
  - Create new elective course(s) based on new club success/interest
- Persons responsible for coordinating:
  - District and School Administration
  - District Technology Department
  - School Guidance Department
- Indicators of Success
  - Survey Complete
  - Running Clubs that competes with other schools
  - Two additional clubs w/ at least 20 participants throughout the year
  - Continued success in enrollment with 25 students who complete and or remain in the course.

**Goal #2:** Engage local colleges and professional associations to empower teachers to improve instructional practices, promote student engagement and achievement, and support the implementation of teaching strategies.

- Action Steps
  - Establish a comprehensive professional development program that addresses the evolving needs of educators, including training on instructional strategies, assessment practices, classroom management, and cultural competence.
  - Reach out to companies in which the district pays for services in order to plan PD sessions for the specific platforms (LinkIt, IReady, Common Lit)
  - Create "Best Practices Academy" where teachers have the platform to showcase best practices to their colleagues
  - Develop a cross curricular team that includes both general ed/special ed staff to meet for vertical articulation focusing on cross curricular goals.
- Persons responsible for coordinating:
  - District and School Administration
  - School Improvement Panel (ScIP)
- Indicators of Success
  - Teacher observations, increase in student achievement
  - Pre and post survey given to staff.
  - Walkthrough and Observational Data
  - 10 BPA sessions implemented in a school year for each school
  - Survey staff for results, walkthroughs, meeting agendas

## Focus Area: Resource Management

**Belief Statement:** We believe in maintaining and enhancing our facilities and digital infrastructure to support our students and staff in a safe and secure learning environment.

**Goal #1:** Create innovative spaces to promote learning that prepares children for their future and the education of the whole child.

- Action Steps
  - Redesign the Media Center at the Middle/High School (Furniture, Technology, etc.)
  - Outdoor Enhancements (lunch seating, outdoor classrooms, etc.)
  - Identify and remodel space to meet the needs of new programs (i.e. Dance Studio, TV studio, etc.)
  - Redesign Elementary School Drop Off/Pick Up
  - Increase seating capacity in elementary school classrooms
- Persons responsible for coordinating:
  - Business Administrator
  - Facilities Manager
  - Assistant Superintendent
- Indicators of Success
  - Completion of Projects
  - Board Resolutions
  - Purchase Orders

**Goal #2:** Maintain and upgrade facilities through green and sustainable solutions.

- Action Steps
  - Upgrade HVAC, Sustained Air Quality & Roofs
  - Upgrade Lighting & Sound system (MHS theater & MHS/ES gym)
  - Complete an Energy Audit and implement findings.
  - Upgrade to energy efficient exit doors
- Persons responsible for coordinating:
  - Business Administrator
  - Facilities Manager
- Indicators of Success
  - Completion of Projects
  - Board Resolutions
  - Purchase Orders

**Goal #3:** Enhance District Security and Efficiency through Comprehensive Technology and Infrastructure Upgrades

- Action Steps
  - Research and Upgrade Technology Fiber Capacity
  - Research and Upgrade PA system/Telephone Communications
  - Research and Upgrade Security Enhancements
  - Research and Upgrade Internal and External Digital Signs
- Persons responsible for coordinating:
  - Business Administrator
  - Facilities Manager
  - Assistant Superintendent
- Indicators of Success
  - Completion of Projects
  - Board Resolutions
  - Purchase Orders

## Focus Area: Community Engagement and Collaboration

**Belief Statement:** We believe in cultivating a vibrant and engaged community where members collaborate effectively towards building a diverse, equitable, and inclusive school environment.

**Goal #1:** Establish channels for open communication among community members, and ensure these platforms are inclusive and welcoming to all voices.

- Action Steps
  - Selecting a website that would encompass all languages for our community
  - Work with Green Team, SAYAA in town to create collaborative events, such as beach cleanup, volunteer coaching etc.
  - Create student driven videos promoting schools and events
  - More opportunities for the community to learn about the school (guest readers, guest speakers, Career fairs, EMT, family lunches)
  - NHS will work with MS students that need extra help and NJHS work with the HW club at SAES
- Persons responsible for coordinating:
  - District and School Administration
  - District Technology Committee
  - District Technology Manager
  - School Personnel
  - Community Organizations and Volunteers
- Indicators of Success
  - Website up and running create online tools/videos for parents to see full range of website
  - Flyers, agendas, pictures of events
  - Videos posted to school website and on school televisions
  - Flyers, agendas, pictures of events
  - Sign-in sheets, pictures, self-reflection sheets by tutors

**Goal #2:** Provide resources, training, and mentorship to empower community members to act and contribute effectively.

- Action Steps
  - Parent nights to help support our community and provide resources to our parents, such as resume writing, Multi-Language Learners, etc.
  - Student to student mentors for grades 5 coming up to the MHS. Use multiple grades to assist with transition to Middle School.
  - Utilize the Alumni page to build relationships and provide opportunities for alumni to connect with the current students and staff to increase positive community connections.
  - Find local businesses that are willing to provide internships to current students, also ask for donation of goods for events such as graduation/moving up signs, coffee for special events.
  - Reach out to larger corporations to see if they offer school-based programs.
- Persons responsible for coordinating:
  - District and School Administration
  - District Technology Committee
  - District Technology Manager
  - School Personnel
  - South Amboy MHS/ Hoffman High School Alumni
  - Community Organizations and Volunteers
- Indicators of Success
  - Flyers, agendas, pictures of events
  - Sign-in sheets, pictures, self-reflection sheets by mentors and mentees
  - Alumni page up and running also securing connections within town
  - Donations Secured, finding local businesses to mentor our students
  - Find larger companies out of SA to host students for programs

## Focus Area: Culture and Climate

**Belief Statement:** We believe in fostering, promoting, and modeling positive student interaction and healthy lifestyles.

**Goal #1:** Build a system for the development and support for culture and climate where South Amboy students, staff, and community can thrive.

- Action Steps
  - Ensure that the physical environment of the school is safe, welcoming, and conducive to learning for all students and staff.
  - Provide resources and support to address the social, emotional, and academic needs of students, including counseling services, mental health supports, and academic interventions.
  - Promote a positive school culture through recognition programs, celebrations of achievement, and opportunities for staff/student growth.
  - Recognize that students have diverse learning styles, interests, and abilities. Differentiate instruction to meet individual needs by offering a variety of teaching methods, materials, and assessments.
  - Integrate SEL into the curriculum to help students develop self-awareness, self-management, self-advocacy, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.
- Persons responsible for coordinating:
  - District and School Administration
  - All School Staff
  - Guidance Counselors and Child Study Team
  - Response to Intervention (RTI) Committee
- Indicators of Success
  - Walk through buildings with facility supervisor
  - Find programs and provide training staff on all programs
  - Pictures of events, Videos posted to school website/social media and on school televisions, Newsletters and SA Times articles
  - Recognize differentiated instruction during walkthroughs, announcements, and bulletin boards.
  - Survey students and staff, meeting agendas, PD sessions

**Goal #2:** Strengthen relationships and communication, so we can foster a culture of collaboration, trust, and open communication within South Amboy Public Schools.

- Action Steps
  - Create and implement a buddy system for new students, parents, staff, and substitutes.
  - Evaluate where current communication breakdowns happen between stakeholders to identify new effective communication strategies.
  - Provide training and resources to support effective conflict resolution, empathy, and cultural competency among all stakeholders.
  - Increase parent/family participation in our schools to share their time, talents and expertise (e.g. expand opportunities for volunteerism).
  - Develop and implement initiatives to celebrate diversity, promote equity, and foster inclusion within the school community.
- Persons responsible for coordinating:
  - District and School Administration
  - School Staff
  - Guidance Counselors and Child Study Team
- Indicators of Success
  - Handbook for new families, staff, and subs to our district
  - Meeting Agendas/Sign-in Sheets
  - Survey to see where communication breakdown happens and implement new strategies to assist with concerns.
  - Find programs and provide training staff on all programs
  - Presentations, morning announcements, assemblies, and lessons incorporating DEI throughout the school year