



## **The Stillwater Elementary Public School District**

### **Is Creating a New Five-Year Strategic Plan**

#### **The 3D Strategic Planning Process: Dream, Determination, and Destiny by Design**

#### **Session 1: What Are the Strengths, Achievements, and Challenges of the Stillwater Elementary School District?**

On the evening of **January 14, 2020**, a cross-section of our stakeholders--community members, parents, educators, school board members, and school district administrators--came together at the Stillwater Elementary School to initiate strategic planning. Over the course of three meetings, our work will focus on both the realities of, and our visions for, the school district in order to form a new Strategic Plan that shall guide the district over the next five years. The first evening's work focused on the current strengths and achievements of, and challenges and opportunities facing, our school district.

We began the process with a comprehensive overview of the school district as presented School Superintendent William Kochis. The reason for and the methodology of creating a new Strategic Plan were presented to the participants by Ms. Helewa of NJSBA.

We then split into four different small groups to identify the strengths and points of pride of our school district and community, and to brainstorm what opportunities and challenges we face in the future. After group discussion, each small group presented to the larger group its "Top 10" (or thereabouts) list of strengths and challenges. Underlying all of our work is the Stillwater Elementary School District's Mission Statement, which was a focal point of the evening's presentations and distributed to all participants.

The information that follows on the following pages is the work of the small groups. As discussed with the participants, all meeting outcomes will be recorded and used at future meetings to inform the final work in preparing the district's new Strategic Plan.

#### **Group #1**

##### *Strengths/Accomplishments*

- Technology
- Universal preschool
- Free summer school with bussing
- BD program
- Small class sizes

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## *Group #1, Strengths/Accomplishments, continued*

- Location
- Forward thinking (proactive)
- Programs / clubs
- Staff
- Security

### *Challenges*

- Financial cuts
- Declining enrollment
- Location
- Mandates (state)
- Transportation
- Building
- Security
- Small town communication
- Paraprofessionals and substitutes
- Time / schedule

## **Group #2**

### *Strengths/Accomplishments*

- Staff
- Small class size
- Grants
- Safety
- Education is valued
- Facility management
- Cooperative learning

### *Challenges*

- Maintaining staff
- Class size
- Technology's place
- Parent participation
- Funding cuts
- Changing economic status
- Aging population

## **Group #3**

### *Strengths/Accomplishments*

- Class size
- Compassionate / dedicated staff
- Innovative and resourceful
- Reputable school
- Full-day preschool FREE!
- Supportive parents!
- Community events
- Cooperative BOE
- Positive relationship with town government



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## **Group #3, Continued**

### *Challenges*

- Class sizes
- Decreasing enrollment
- S.E.L. challenges
- Budget cuts
- School wide / student fundraising
- Family scheduling (homework, clubs, night meeting)

## **Group #4**

### *Strengths/Accomplishments*

- Security
- Teachers / staff
- Small class sizes
  - define # (primary / upper)
- Resources
  - Book Room
- Progress monitoring
  - quickly addressed
- Makerspace
- Yoga / Mindfulness
- Garden / Outdoor classroom
- Recycling – students involved
- PTA

### *Challenges*

- Security – impact → children safe / community out
- Enrollment – declining
- Funding
  - small classes
  - define #
  - programs
- Progress / Special Services
  - adjusting needs / support to fit what student needs
- Classroom libraries

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After sharing our small groups' results with the entire group, gratitude was expressed to the Board of Education and Superintendent Kochis for making this initiative possible, and to all participants for their wide-ranging contributions and collaborative work.

Our next meeting is set for **Tuesday, February 11, at 7pm at the Stillwater Elementary School All-Purpose Room**. We will engage in a **Visioning Activity** to help refine our collective vision for the Stillwater Elementary School District, which promises to be a truly **fun** exercise! We strongly encourage all to **bring a friend** to our next meeting. New participants from all facets of the community are welcome at all three Strategic Planning meetings. We look forward to working with you at our future sessions!

***We look forward to seeing you for our next Strategic Planning meeting, February 11, at 7pm in the Stillwater Elementary School All-Purpose Room, and at our third meeting on March 5. Bring a friend!***



**OUR MISSION STATEMENT:** The Stillwater Township School, a high-achieving, rural school of excellence, works in partnership with students, parents, staff and a caring community to provide every student a progressive and nurturing educational environment designed to maximize individual potential, instill self-esteem, promote citizenship and foster an appreciation for local history and a passion for life-long learning.

To achieve this end, the Stillwater Education Partners will:

- Provide a challenging, dynamic educational program that meets the needs and talents of each individual student and enables them to achieve and exceed the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards at each grade level;
- Encourage the capacity to think critically, solve problems and work in a cooperative manner;
- Provide opportunity for community input and advice;
- Emphasize continuing staff and curriculum development; and
- Utilize district resources in an efficient manner.