

3D Strategic Plan

2020 - 2025

Strategic Plan
Executive Summary

Prepared for the

Stillwater Township Elementary School Board of Education

Facilitated by: NJSBA Field Services Department

Kathleen Helewa and Matt Lee



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

3D Strategic Plan

Stillwater Elementary School District

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Acknowledgements

The Stillwater Township Elementary School District's 3D Strategic Planning process, completed during the 2019-20 academic year, could not have occurred without the support, cooperation and dedication of the following people and groups:

Stillwater Township Elementary School Board of Education

Dennis DeGroat, President

Kathleen Svendsen, Vice President

Krista Galante

Jennifer Kraft

Danielle LoCascio

Shannon Nothstine

Joanne Saul

Karen Thibault

Cheryl Williver

Superintendent

William Kochis

Business Administrator

René Metzgar

Stillwater Township Educators, Parents, and Community Members

New Jersey School Boards Association

Kathleen Helewa, Field Service Representative

Matt Lee, Field Service Representative



Strategic Planning Process

Executive Summary

A. Educating the Board to make an informed decision

In October of 2019, Kathleen Helewa of the New Jersey School Boards Association met with the Administration of the Stillwater Elementary school to discuss the process of renewing the District's 2014-19 3D Strategic Plan, and the strategic planning services available through NJSBA.

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

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

Subsequently, the Board contracted with NJSBA for these services.

B. 3D Strategic Plan Meetings

Ms. Helewa, with the assistance of fellow Field Service Representative Matt Lee, facilitated three strategic planning meetings. The following outcomes were derived from these meetings.

1. The strengths and challenges facing the Stillwater Elementary School and community,
2. The school district stakeholders' vision for the school district, and
3. Draft goals and objectives for the District's Strategic Plan.

Outcomes from all three of the strategic planning meetings are included in this notebook.

C. Developing the Action Plans

The Superintendent and Administrative Team will develop action plans to implement the 3D Strategic Plan after the plan is approved. The action plans will include the following:

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

D. Next Steps

The Board of Education will adopt the plan and begin implementation.



Stillwater Elementary School District

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.



GOALS

The four goal areas that emerged from the group work are:

- 1. Teaching and Learning**
- 2. Global Citizenship**
- 3. Community**
- 4. The Whole Child**



GOAL AREA # 1

Teaching and Learning

Goal Statement: To create a positive learning environment where there is a balance between technology communication and interpersonal communication that will foster and promote creativity, while facilitating a growth mindset.

Objectives:

1. Create responsible digital citizens through direct imbedded instruction.
2. Enhance students' thoughts and feelings to develop empathy and interpersonal skills.
3. Through problem-based learning, students will use critical thinking to become lifelong learners.



GOAL AREA # 2

Global Citizenship

Goal Statement: To create global citizens who are educated and active stewards of the Earth.

Objectives:

1. Create authentic experiences in all subject areas.
2. Develop student service projects in each grade level, both school- and community-based.
3. Utilize life literacies and key skills standards to increase digital citizenship, creativity and innovation, critical thinking and problem solving, technology literacy, global and cultural awareness, and information/media literacy.
4. Increase and improve sustainability efforts through environmentally conscious initiatives.



GOAL AREA # 3

Community

Goal Statement: To build and strengthen stronger communications between students, staff and community members to create lifelong learning.

Objectives:

1. Increase public relations with all stakeholders.
2. Expand open communication of community and belonging within the schools.
3. Build relationships between students and community members to develop social skills and civic awareness.



GOAL AREA # 4

The Whole Child

Goal Statement: To develop a culture of kindness, respect, and tolerance to promote and enhance creativity and facilitate a growth mindset.

Objectives:

1. Expand social/emotional learning and life skills program to impact the whole student body.
2. Encourage critical thinkers by highlighting their gifts and interests.
3. Increase students' ability to advocate for their learning experience.



Appendix A

Action Plans



Appendix B

Superintendent's State of the District Report



Appendix C

Strengths of and Challenges for the Stillwater Township Elementary School District





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 by 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

(Continues on the following page)





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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

(Continues on the following page)





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Group 3, Strengths / Accomplishments, continued

- Reputable school
- Full-day preschool FREE!
- Supportive parents!
- Community events
- Cooperative BOE
- Positive relationship with town government

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;
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Appendix D

Visioning Exercise Outcomes





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The Stillwater Elementary School District Is Creating a New Five-Year Strategic Plan

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

Session 2: What Is Our Vision for the Stillwater Elementary School District?

On the evening of **February 11, 2020**, a cross-section of our stakeholders--community members, parents, educators, school district Administrators, and members of the Stillwater Board of Education--came together at the Stillwater Elementary School to continue the process of strategic planning. Over the course of three meetings, our work will focus on both the realities of, and our visions for, the school district. This work will form a new Strategic Plan that shall guide the district for the next five years. The first evening's session examined the current strengths and achievements of, and challenges and opportunities facing, our community and school. Our second meeting's focus and work revolved around our individual and collective visions for the Stillwater Township Public School District in the future.

After a warm welcome from Board President Dennis DeGroat and Superintendent William Kochis, we reviewed the reasons for and the methodology of creating a new Strategic Plan.

We then advanced to a visioning exercise: each of us imagined being away from Stillwater for five years and returning home, to find the Stillwater Township Elementary School has been featured in a Time Magazine cover story as a national model for 21st-century education. The group was asked to ponder, *what would you envision occurring in our school to make this happen? What would be the title of such an article, touting such astonishing success? What would be the key visions in the article – meaning, what would be the means the district would have used to make such exemplary educational success a reality – if there had been no pre-determined mandates nor limits on resources?* Participants then divided into four small groups to develop a shared vision.

The information on the following pages is the work of the small groups, each of which wrote a title for the hypothetical Time Magazine article described above, and key visions that the article would comprise. Underlying all of our work is the District's Mission Statement, which serves as a guiding set of principles, and was featured in the evening's presentation and distributed to all participants.

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





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Group #1

Title of Article: "Charting a Course to Redefine Community from Local to Global"

Key Visions:

- Interpersonal communication
- Self-regulation and developing resolve
- School is embraced as the hub of the community
- Educated and active stewards of the Earth
- Individualized education plans highlighting each child's gifts and interests
- Structures in place to promote and enhance creativity and facilitate a growth mindset

Group #2

Title of Article: "Blooming Where They Are Planted"

Key Visions:

- Innovative learners
- Lifelong learners, tolerant & confident
- Person to person communication / proper social skills
- Kind, respectful, tolerant
- Positive culture / STEAM
- Critical thinkers / perseverance / determination
- Life skills / self-sustainability
- Personalized learning, working at their own pace
- Civic duties / service / philanthropy
- Student service projects / community group projects

Group #3

Title of Article: "Stillwater Students Become Independent Thinkers!"

Key Visions:

- Critical thinking
- Social / Emotional Learning
- Authentic experiences
- Media literacy
- Self-advocacy
- Global competence
- Problem-based learning model





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Group #4

Title of Article: "Stillwater School Develops Limitless Connections"

Key Visions:

- Lost Arts - Home Ec, Shop Class, Etiquette, IRL & Digital, Agriculture
- Professional development – Training Without Limits: research, sabbaticals, teacher exchange programs
- Whole Student Development – Phones for Buttons, themed learning, theater, enhanced sports, flexible grouping -- interest-based, multi-age
- Facilities Development – A / C, state-of-the-art gym, ropes course, outdoor equipment, time to use it

After sharing and discussing the groups' work with the entire group, and considering the outcomes of the first session, we identified three consistently emerging themes, or, "common threads." These three major themes identify the three goal areas for the new Strategic Plan. We also saw that several sub-themes were emerging, which should be incorporated within these goal areas, as follows.

1. Teaching and Learning
 - Technology
 - Communication
2. Global Citizenship
 - Stewards of the Earth
 - Communication
3. Community
 - Communication
4. Whole Child
 - Practical life skills
 - Communication

At the conclusion of the work session, President DeGroat expressed his deep gratitude on behalf of the Board and Administration to the participants for their wide-ranging contributions and collaborative work.

Our next meeting is set for **Thursday, March 5, 2020 at 7pm at the Stillwater Elementary School.** We will write draft Goal Statements and supporting Objectives for each of the four goal areas. Participants will self-select in which Goal Area they would like to work. As in past





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meetings, individuals will work together in small groups, but they will not be randomly assigned; each person will work in the goal area in which they have the greatest interest. New and current participants from all facets of the community and our stakeholder groups are welcome to join us for this most important meeting. We look forward to working with you at our final session!

We look forward to seeing you at our third meeting on March 5. Attend with a friend!



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Appendix E

Creating the Goals and Objectives





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The Stillwater Elementary School District Is Creating a New Five-Year Strategic Plan

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

Session 3: Translating our Vision for the Stillwater Elementary School District into Goals & Objectives for our Strategic Plan

On the evening of **March 5, 2020**, a cross-section of our stakeholders--community members, parents, educators, school district administrators, and members of the Stillwater Board of Education--came together at the Stillwater Elementary School for our final strategic planning session. Over the course of three meetings, our work delineated the strengths and challenges of the school district, our unbridled visions for the Stillwater Elementary School for the next five years, and finally, translating that work into draft goal statements and supporting objectives for the new Strategic Plan.

After a warm welcome from Board President Pro Tempe Shannon Nothstine, we recapped the outcomes from our second meeting, which established the four goal areas and underlying sub-themes for the new Plan. Reviewing the full outcomes from the first and second sessions, we individually parsed the data points from the "Strengths & Challenges" and the "Visions" and categorized the data into the related goal areas. We then, as a large group, reviewed the process for writing a broad, overarching goal statement and supporting objectives. Participants then broke into small groups, one per goal area, with each individual self-selecting the group in which to work. Using a consensus process, the small groups employed the data points and their own individual awareness and expertise to write draft objectives and a goal statement for their goal area. That work was reported out to the large group at the end of the evening, to the great satisfaction of all assembled.

On the following pages is a summary of that work. As always, the District's Mission Statement guided our endeavors.





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Goal #1: Teaching & Learning

Goal Statement: To create a positive learning environment where there is a balance between technology communication and interpersonal communication that will foster and promote creativity, while facilitating a growth mindset.

Objectives:

1. Create responsible digital citizens through direct imbedded instruction.
2. Enhance students' thoughts and feelings to develop empathy and interpersonal skills.
3. Through problem-based learning, students will use critical thinking to become lifelong learners.

Goal #2: Global Citizenship

Goal Statement: To create global citizens who are educated and active stewards of the Earth.

Objectives:

1. Create authentic experiences in all subject areas.
2. Develop student service projects in each grade level, both school- and community-based.
3. Utilize life literacies and key skills standards to increase digital citizenship, creativity and innovation, critical thinking and problem solving, technology literacy, global and cultural awareness, and information / media literacy.
4. Increase and improve sustainability efforts through environmentally conscious initiatives.

Goal #3: Community

Goal Statement: To build and strengthen stronger communications between students, staff and community members to create lifelong learning.

Objectives:

1. Create productive citizens through school-wide community service projects.
2. Increase public relations with all stakeholders.
3. Expand open communication of community and belonging within the schools.
4. Build relationships between students and community members to develop social skills and civic awareness.

(Goal Area #4 is on the next page)





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Goal #4: The Whole Child

Goal Statement: To develop a culture of kindness, respect, and tolerance to promote and enhance creativity and facilitate a growth mindset.

Objectives:

1. Expand social / emotional learning and life skills program to impact the whole student body.
2. Encourage critical thinkers by highlighting their gifts and interests.
3. Increase students' ability to advocate for their learning experience.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Ms. Nothstine expressed her deep gratitude on behalf of the Board and Administration for everyone's support of the Stillwater Elementary School, and for their student-centered work on the Strategic Plan, all which express the values of the Stillwater community so well.

Next Steps

The above Goal Statements and Objectives will be used directly to create the Stillwater Elementary Schools' Strategic Plan for the years 2020-2025. Superintendent Kochis will review all of the above work to create a plan ready for Board approval. The plan will be printed in document form by the New Jersey School Boards Association, and will be delivered to the Stillwater Board of Education for formal acceptance and vote at a BOE meeting in the near future, date to be announced. The Administrative Team, led by Superintendent Kochis, will develop action plans for all areas of the Strategic Plan over the next five years. The Board and Administration will rely on the new Strategic Plan when setting annual District and Board Goals.

It has been a pleasure to join such a dedicated group of individuals who so ardently support the students and stakeholders of the Stillwater Elementary School. We are certain that this unique plan will productively guide the District over the next five years in alignment with the community's vision for its students. Your good work and dedication are exemplary!





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Stillwater Township Elementary School

Stillwater, NJ



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