



Creating a Strategic Plan for the Morris School District

Meeting 1 Outcomes
Tuesday, October 1, 2024

Mission Statement

It is the mission of the Morris School District to empower each student to ascend academically, socially, and emotionally by providing equal access to continuous opportunities for achieving academic excellence, developing meaningful relationships, and becoming future ready.

Meeting 1 of 3: What are the Strengths, Challenges/Opportunities of the Morris School District

On October 1, 2024, Morris School District students, administrators, staff, Board members, parents, community members, and partners came together to initiate strategic planning. The first evening's topic focused on the strengths and challenges/opportunities of the Morris School District to help inform the question of where the district is now.

The meeting was officially opened and welcoming remarks were made by board president Katie Cole. Dr. Anne Mucci, Superintendent, provided an informative overview of the district. The strategic planning process was introduced by Charlene Peterson from New Jersey School Boards Association.

The participants gathered into 19 mixed stakeholder groups to brainstorm the strengths and challenges/opportunities of the Morris School District. After discussion, each small group came to a consensus on the top 10 strengths and top 10 challenges/opportunities that were later shared with the large group.

The next strategic planning sessions are scheduled for: Tuesday, October 15 and Wednesday, October 30. During the October 15th meeting, using a similar brainstorming process, we will identify our visions for the district five years from now. The final meeting will involve writing goal statements using the input from the first two meetings. Everyone is welcome, even if you were unable to attend the first meeting.

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



Work of the Small Groups:

Group # 1	
STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES/OPPORTUNITIES
Communication to parents	Expand votech/blue collar opportunities
Parent/community involvement	Rely on technology to teach, too much use
Elementary special education	Student/community outreach
MHS course offerings are robust	ESL program/curriculum
Bilingual staff	MHS get more involved at CCM for latino population
After care program	Community volunteers to go to the schools
Community activity	Teacher shortage
Family activity	Substitute teacher coverage-classes get no education
Good bus transportation	More after care/extra curricular activities
	Volunteer program with local organizations and companies
	Programs for families to engage
	Expanded opportunities for FMS/MHS students to access guidance resources (periodic small group setting)
	HS level-more support for English language learners
	Lack of recess at FMS

Group # 2	
STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES/OPPORTUNITIES
Inclusivity and diversity - population and programs and extra curriculars	Transportation - monitoring students, swipe cards and turnover in drivers
Leadership - reorg, communication, effectively making change	Curriculum consistency-new teacher support, leverage veteran teachers
Resources - quality and long term teachers, MEF	Extra help hours - FMS and Elementary
Leveraging community partners	Retain talent/recruit (teachers and bus drivers)
New FMS structure	Parent resources to support curriculum
Sports programs	Space constraints of MHS - facilities/parking
Unique identity of each school	

Group # 3	
STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES/OPPORTUNITIES
MEF ability support fund academic programs	Allocation of funds-science/technology
Flexibility/responsiveness (Middle School structure)	Achievement-multilingual learners
Communication - dojo transparency	Integration - IEP's/special needs
Recognize the duality of social media/internet use	District communication - sources: speed of information, acknowledgement of education professionals
Class sizes	Collective action around the use of social media
	Teacher recruitment/retention
	Diversity of staffing
	Finances

Group # 4	
STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES/OPPORTUNITIES
Excellent teaching staff	More support for SEL for teachers
Resources (STEM, Visual Arts)	Bussing-too long and not dependable
Teachers are supported	More "fun" and out of class experiences
Teachers are adaptable/assimilate to many styles	Practical learning out of the classroom
Teacher/union relationship above par	Our own busses=limited trips
Pre-K program exceptional	No German, Latin, choices in languages
New technology lab	Dual language pilot program-early education
Pride in upgraded facilities	Modernizing music spaces in the High School
CST and counselors are extraordinary	Promote musicianship and visual arts (Ie: in tonight's presentation there was no mention of band, chorus, marching band, dance)
	Continue to invest in VPA spaces
	Dance studios
	More investment in sports facilities-wrestling, fencing and swimming
	Upgraded air conditioning
	Educate nursing staff on anxiety disorders and recognizing how to calm students
	More time for lunch
	IEP & INRS process can be improved
	Activities without chromebooks

	Cell phone/apple watch free
	More digital free time, especially FMS
	Life skills (money management, home economics)
	Planning for future space

Group # 5	
STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES/OPPORTUNITIES
Diversity	What about the "lost middle"? (Not AP, not struggling, the typical child)
Layers of support	Expand dual enrollment
All welcoming	Continue articulation K-FMS-HS
Strong HSA/MEF	Clubs, activities and electives are getting better funding as #'s rise?
Loyalty/pride in district	Additional language support
Sense of tradition - strong and supportive BOE	Pilot program - aging buildings
Clubs, activities and electives	Partnership with local entrepreneurs

Group # 6	
STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES/OPPORTUNITIES
Diversity of our schools	Leveraging the diversity
Staff	Teacher retention and their experience
Technology-what we offer the students	Stream lining websites and communication
Proud community	Standardization of process (ie: p/u notes)
Diverse programs at the High School level	K-5 synergy and unification
	Assessment and preparation for Middle School

Group # 7	
STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES/OPPORTUNITIES
Multicultural snapshot of real world	Cross-school training/collaborate especially at transitioning - academic consistency - build fidelity
MEF connection/grants	Time for lunch/service
Early education for anti-bullying/social emotional	More support for all
Genuine effort to listen to input, to evolve	Opportunity for community to learn Spanish/learn English

Parent support/involved	Students grow with students - staff for growing concerns - opportunities for all students to connect
Improved communication	Keep improving communication especially with explaining changes and why
Genuine effort to listen to input, to evolve	Request for both - more honors/homogenous and 6th Grade heterogeneous classes - promote discourse
Parent support/involved	More opportunities for visual arts/hands-on at elementary
Hands-on science in elementary grades	Balance rigor and mental health
Variety of courses at MHS and FMS	PD strong development for student engagement
Arts program - many opportunities to engage/try	Developing appropriate rigor opportunities to be challenged
Restorative justice/focus on growth	Discipline/behavior/consequences
	Math every day in FMS
	Teacher and student connection - communication with families on progress
	Curriculum night - grade specific - Back to school night is too crazy

Group # 8	
STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES/OPPORTUNITIES
SEL focus friendship group	Executive functioning support
Opportunities in and out of school district - Rec program, after school programs, variety offered	Standard for teacher communication - class dojo and newsletter consistency
SEL focus at Elementary level	Training for teachers on Chat GPT detection
Friendship group	Constant transitions within the district
Mentor/tutoring through transitions for new student communication is timely@ MHS	Need more support of individuals who know them
People can feel colleagues and teachers dedication to students and community	Constant transitions after 2nd, 5th, 8th Grades can be good but can be difficult when students transition with IEP's and 504's
The support	No consistent - new case managers to support children with emotional needs
Cohesiveness between sister schools	Look at collective feedback from NP parents vs K-3-5 parents - potentially speak to FMS parents

Families - engagement, approachability, understanding, communication with teachers and staff	Teachers are moved a lot within the district - difficult for teachers
There are “no bad teachers”	Technology usage and understanding of its educational purpose
Growth mindset and commitment to continual growth	More communication between parent/teacher
Workshops to assist “strategies of parenting”	Executive functioning
Notification from school as to tardies/absences	Opportunities for teachers to be able to detect Chat GPT

Group # 9	
STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES/OPPORTUNITIES
Class dojo to know what is going on with your child	Show the kids kindness more
The activities of the children due	Show the kids communication skills
The help that the students receive from their teachers	Enforce more English on ESL kids
Counselor assigned to each student	Advocate for ESL students
Sports in MHS/FMS	Study guide for kids more explanation
Powerschool	Second person on the bus enforcing safety
	Have the option of letters home or gmail
	More communication with parents not just when students are in trouble
	Inform everyone what was said at they meetings that they could not make it to
	Communication with ESL parents
	More English classes for littles

Group # 10	
STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES/OPPORTUNITIES
Strong MEF	Staff retention
Longevity of staff	Building space (leads to larger class sizes)
Sense of community: supportive, trust in staff	Expand Quest program
Arts are valued	Bilingual program - additional supports
Teachers are willing and want to learn new things	
VP’s follow students throughout High School	

Group # 11	
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STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES/OPPORTUNITIES
Caring school community	More extracurriculars for elementary
Diversity of programs and activities - performing arts	Rigor in learning/breadth of opportunities, especially K-5
Busing/transportation	Outdoor learning spaces
Strong partnerships with colleges-corporations	Aged buildings - electrical and HVAC
Feeling heard and seen as parents especially special education	Lower level math opportunities
	Communicating program offerings especially for special education
	Bilingual opportunities for all students
	Corporate partnership (Ie: Verizon Stem Labs)
	Standardize elementary experience
	More recess for K-5
	Executive functioning support
	The why and how of programs

Group # 12	
STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES/OPPORTUNITIES
Excellence of instructional staff-commitment	More pervasive exposure to all that makes the MSD great (communication and marketing)
Safety and security felt by students and community	Clarity of communication and more transparency
Positive school culture and climate: inclusivity, positivity and joy	Widen the offerings of world language at the K-5 levels
Diversity of academic and curricular offerings	Earlier exposure to diverse content
Facilities-niche classrooms and programming to meet interests	Physical space (instructionally and athletically) Issues - expansion!
Voices of the students and community are essential components of change	Elevate the rigor for all students at the lower levels (K-5)
Focused attention to addressing challenges for change/growth	

Group # 13	
STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES/OPPORTUNITIES
Tech policies moving in the right direction	Need more staffing-need more/retain/mentors
Great teachers/administrators	More parent involvement
Late bus	Noone knows how great we are
School supplies given	Public spaces-quality of life (air conditioning/windows)

Students as a priority	School start times- later for older and earlier for younger
Buildings not overcrowded	Extra help - needs a better structure
Opportunities - clubs/classes/sports/arts	
MEF - yay for free Pre-K!	
Various clubs	Lunch options
Easy to know your grades	Recess
Teachers are helpful	Cut 80 minute blocks shorter
Safe busses/4:00 pm busses	Transitions at different times to lessen the amount of people
No place for hate	More cycle time
Trusted adults	More field trips
Diversity	Upgrading the auditorium
Flexible seating	More time on I-ready
Trailers are newer and have air conditioning	Mix houses
Falcon tickets and school store	Upgrading the fields and adding bleachers/bathrooms
Flexibility of meeting with Administrators	

Group # 14	
STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES/OPPORTUNITIES
Extracurricular activities-number of diversity offerings	Lack of sufficient training for bullying (teachers)
Addressing technology	More transparent communication with parents/collaborating for children's placement in classroom
Sense of community and parent involvement	Smart goals on IEP
Class size	More communication with parents on options for kids activities (pricing, time commitment)
More Aides on busses	ESL program reviews for effectiveness
	Advisory group - sessions for parents unfamiliar with American education system

Group # 15	
STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES/OPPORTUNITIES
Co-curricular activities are expansive at MHS/FMS	Space at schools
Registration process is easier for parents	Alternative programs for graduation
Staff dedication	Loss of staff
Invested families	Transition from Pre-K to K

Equity and inclusion growth	Budget/funding
	Adapting to technology
	Private schools near by

Group # 16	
STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES/OPPORTUNITIES
Diversity	Aging facilities - Modernization,energy efficiency,ADA compliance, corporate sponsorship
Many clubs/activities	Supporting all career path - Academic performance/trades/careers in demand (ie: aviation)
Amazing staff & recruitment	Entice students to take advantage of faculty
Having a pool	Retain student talents-academic/athletics
Breadth of curriculum	Test prep vs whole child approach
Parent programs	Departmentalize earlier (3rd Grade) - expose to subject specialists earlier
Community partnerships (Ie: Ed Foundation)	Homework amounts in 10th Grade
Academic performance	

Group # 17	
STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES/OPPORTUNITIES
Wonderful staff	Pomptonian should have an open forum
Music program	More certified professionals
Dual teacher classrooms/small group instruction	Trauma personnel in all schools bilingual
The High School productions	More services/support for parents-help accessing resources
Working with Grow it Green	Additional/ongoing training for teachers and staff
	Begin Spanish instruction earlier-maybe dual language options
	More intervention staff to support teachers in classroom
	Powerschool is not user friendly

Group # 18	
STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES/OPPORTUNITIES

Student progress	More communication in Spanish between home and school
Progress of English language in lower grades	MHS more focus on English development vs. Spanish
Caring/loving teachers	More 1:1 instruction
Security	Designated person to help Spanish speaking families navigate (technology)
	Opportunities to empower Spanish speaking families and not relying on children
	Making Spanish community aware of safety measures at school vs. home countries