
**Stillwater Township School District
Strategic Planning 2025
Meeting #1 Recap**

This Spring, the Stillwater Township Board of Education intends to approve a Strategic Plan which will guide the Board's and Administration's decisions over the next five years. The Board of Education and Superintendent Dr. William Kochis would like to form the District's new Strategic Plan with community participation from a wide variety of school stakeholders. Thus, the District announced and advertised that all those interested are welcome to join in the process, which will be accomplished over three 90-minute evening meetings at the Stillwater Township Elementary School on March 19, April 1, and April 7, with consultant Kathleen Helewa facilitating the sessions. Approximately twenty people attended the first meeting to work together on the new Strategic Plan, including Stillwater Township residents, parents, teachers, administrators, and the Board of Education, and a student.

We began the first session with an overview of the concept of a Strategic Plan and the process for creating one. By following a Strategic Plan, the Board and Administration will be able to allocate its resources optimally to support the community's aspirations for the students of Stillwater Township.

In order to create a Plan that is forward-thinking and can be aligned with the realities of the District, Stillwater School's strategic planning process will address three questions:

1. What is the present state of the school district?
2. What is our vision for the future of the district?
3. What goals and objectives could we accomplish over the next five years to achieve our vision?

We focused on the first question during our first meeting. Dr. Kochis presented a comprehensive State of the District report. The report provided an overview of the District, including trends in student demographics, staffing and staff reductions, student achievement data, community involvement in the school, the state of school facilities, reductions in State aid since 2017, school successes, and challenges that Dr. Kochis foresees for the District.

At the conclusion of Dr. Kochis' report, all participants then split into three small groups, and individually completed their own SWOT analyses of the school district. Participants completed the four sections of a **SWOT** individually, and then collectively as a group: **Strengths**, internal factors that have a positive outcome for the student experience and are completely under the District's control; **Weaknesses**, factors that could be improved to have a better outcome for the student experience and are wholly under the District's control; **Opportunities**, conditions which are coming from outside of the District but have or may have a positive impact on our students; and **Threats**, external factors and conditions over which the District has no control but which may harm our school or the students' experience in the District. We noted that some items may fit into more than one category.

The small groups then worked together to share the individuals' analyses and to come up with a collective SWOT analysis for their group, coming to consensus on about five bullet points for each category. The following are the small groups' SWOT reports, verbatim:



Green Group

Strengths:

- Communication
- Academic achievement
- Community support
- Test results
- Resourceful—grants, creative
- Teaching staff, administrators, and Board

Weaknesses:

- Funding
- Fiscal survival
- Help!! [i.e., reaching out to elected officials for assistance with school funding]
- Finances
- Broader community involvement

Opportunities:

- Regionalization study
- Community involvement
- Election Results
- Succession from NJ

Threats:

- Prevailing wage
- State mandates
- Low income housing
- Regionalization
- Staff reductions

Blue Group

Strengths:

- Positive school climate
- NJSLA scores
- Meeting diverse needs of students
- Communication



Blue Group, continued

Weaknesses:

- Staff burnout; staff spread too thin

Opportunities:

- Shared services, looking to expand (regional)
- Supportive parents & involvement
- Community
- Creative fundraising
- Grants

Threats:

- Meeting the diverse needs of students
- Staffing
- Aging infrastructure
- Aid reductions / funding
- Increasing mental health concerns

Orange Group

Strengths:

- Admin and teachers are great
- Testing scores are great
- Management of finances
- Good Board involvement
- Inspirational teachers and school culture

Weaknesses:

- Community awareness of financial issues from the State
- Need greater opportunity for parent involvement
- Low CST staffing

Opportunities:

- Get increased number of people involved
- Get Environmental Commission to assist BOE with Buildings and Grounds issues—like the gym sinking



Orange Group, continued

Threats:

- Political climate creates funding issues
- Increasing mental health issues
- Financial stress on families
- No ratables in Stillwater
- KRHS financial situation
- CST staffing due to budget cuts
- Cannot fix building issues due to budget cuts

Our work for the evening concluded with thanks to all those who joined us to support our beloved Stillwater School, and to Dr. Kochis and the Stillwater Township BOE for this opportunity to engage in purposeful and robust conversation about our school and students. We will continue the work at our next session on **Tuesday, April 1**, during which we will delineate our long-term aspirations for Stillwater students. **Interested participants from every facet of the school community who were not able to attend our first meeting are eagerly encouraged to join us at our second and third Strategic Planning sessions.** Meetings begin in the Stillwater Township Elementary School All Purpose Room at 6:30pm and finish at 8pm.



Come join us on Tuesday, April 1, at 6:30pm
in the Stillwater Township Elementary School All Purpose Room!

Everyone welcomed—attend with a friend!

~ Please enter through the back doors by the gym. ~

~ Mark your calendar for our third and final meeting on April 7-