Creating a Strategic Plan for the South Harrison Township School District

{Meeting 1}

Mission Statement

The South Harrison Township School District in partnership with an engaged community, prepares students to become confident, capable, life-long learners and problem solvers by providing experiences in a safe, supportive and academically challenging environment.

Session 1
What are the Strengths, Achievements, Challenges and Opportunities of the South Harrison Township School District?

On February 4, 2026, staff, administrators, parents, community members, and board members—Thirty-Two (32) participants in total—came together to begin the strategic planning process for the South Harrison Township School District.

The meeting began with a flag salute led by Board President Mrs. Joan Pino-Talbot, followed by a welcome and introduction from Superintendent Dr. Elizabeth Winterburn, who presented the current State of the District report. Ms. Michelle Kennedy of the New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA) then provided an overview of the strategic planning process.

Participants reviewed the consensus-building approach used in strategic planning, with the evening's focus on identifying district strengths and challenges. Attendees were divided into four (4) self-selected groups and engaged in brainstorming sessions to identify strengths and challenges within the district. Each group then reached consensus on its top ten (10) strengths/achievements and top ten (10) challenges/opportunities.

The outcomes were shared with all participants as each group's spokesperson presented its findings. During the report-out, participants noted commonalities across groups, which helped identify recurring themes throughout the discussion. The following summary reflects the collective work of the small groups. As noted during the meeting, all consensus points have been recorded and posted on the district website to ensure transparency and encourage continued engagement throughout the strategic planning process.

Small Group Consensus: Strengths/Achievements & Challenges/Opportunities

Table 1

Strengths	Challenges
PTO	Technology hardware - newline boards
School events are well attended	Wear and tear on the Chromebooks
Staff Engagement in the personal life of students	Expanded recess facilities
Staff is invested in the students - looks at whole child emotionally and academically	Gym needs updates and cleaning
Crossover in programs between subjects	Having enough inclusion classes so that there is a balance in order to meet student needs (every class could benefit from 2 teachers or at minimum a paraprofessional)
Time to meet with grade level and other grades	Lockers are in need of repair
SCIP committee - looks at ways to provide up to date curriculum and professional development	Bathrooms need updates
	Facilities Updates (Gym, lockers, bathrooms, recess areas)

Table 2

Strengths	Challenges
Staff High Retention level	Funding future budget cuts
Depth of knowledge -good base staying within the school	Community turnover uncertainty
Class size	Combined district-school consolidation/reorganization
Community Engagement	Keeping pace with the other sending district's curriculum, Math scores
Home and school support - PTO	Safety / building
Teacher resourcefulness and dedication	SRO Officer staff
Staff accessibility	Pre fourth grade science activity integration
	Technology improvements/updates

Table 3

Strengths	Challenges
Parent Involvement- PTO	Transition into middle school for upper grades (too much support? student independence)
Maximize resources	Funding
Being a writer program	Special Ed Support
Growth	Not a standalone district (relying on shared services)
Sense of Community	Chromebooks
Science Program 4-6	Upcoming Special education student need concerns
Math program cohesive	Facility update
Quality of students (positive behaviors)	Resource officer
Consistent teaching staff	Keeping up preschool numbers (Enrollment numbers across the school)
Teaching teamwork	
Small Group instruction	

Table 4

Strengths	Challenges
Extra-curricular activities for fourth through sixth grade	Extra-curricular activities for children K through 3
PTO and community involvement	Stem as a special
Advanced math class for the upper grades (offering pre-algebra) and math push in support 4th through 6th	Not as personalized because of the larger class sizes: large transition
High morale	More opportunities for parental involvement during the school day
High quality staff and administration	PBSIS reward system
A more personalized education due to smaller class sizes	Updated Chromebooks
Additional aide support in K and 1	Keeping the preschool population up
Facebook page/large presence on social media	

Following each group's reporting out, the following common themes were identified through the large group discussion:

Common Themes Strengths	Common Themes Challenges
Strong PTO, parent involvement, and home–school partnership	Technology needs and updates, particularly Chromebooks and classroom hardware
High level of community engagement and well-attended school events	Facilities maintenance and building upgrades (gym, bathrooms, lockers, recess areas)
Dedicated, consistent staff with high retention and strong relationships with students	School safety and security, including the role of the School Resource Officer
Small class sizes that support personalized, student-centered learning	Enrollment and funding concerns, especially maintaining preschool population numbers
Strong academic programming, particularly in math and science (upper elementary)	Special education support and student services
Supportive school culture focused on student success and engagement	Class size and transition challenges, including maintaining personalized learning and supporting student independence in upper grades

The second strategic planning session is scheduled for:

Thursday, February 26, 2026 at 6:00 pm,
South Harrison Township Elementary School,
904 Mullica Hill Road, Harrisonville NJ 08039

Meetings #2 and #3 are scheduled for 1 hour. Meetings start and end promptly.

During the February 26th meeting, we will create a shared vision together for the future of the South Harrison Township School District. We will discuss our aspirations and expectations for our students and school district.

Please join us. Bring a friend! Everyone is welcome! We look forward to seeing you!

Thank you!