



Creating a Strategic Plan for the Hunterdon Central Regional High School District

Mission Statement

Hunterdon Central is an innovative educational community dedicated to the intellectual, social, and emotional safety and growth of all students.

While fostering curiosity and promoting wellness, we aspire to create powerful learning experiences, establish strong partnerships, and serve as contributing members of society.

Session 1

Identifying Strengths & Challenges of the Hunterdon Central Regional High School District

On February 17, 2026, Hunterdon Central Regional High School District administrators, Board of Education members, staff, parents, students, and community members, eighty-three (83) in all, came together to initiate strategic planning. The meeting began with a welcome and introduction by the Board President, Ms. Dorothea Kellogg. Ms. Jessica Cangelosi-Hade, Superintendent, presented the current “State of the Schools” report. Mary Ann Friedman and Cathy Pouria from New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA) were introduced and explained the strategic planning process.

We reviewed the consensus process utilized in strategic planning. The topic for the evening focused on identifying district strengths and challenges. Participants gathered in randomly assigned groups, fifteen groups in all, and engaged in brainstorming the district’s strengths and challenges. After group discussion, each group identified their consensus points, “Top 10” strengths and challenges. Each group reported their outcomes to the larger group. The large group then identified “Common Themes” that had occurred throughout the small group outcomes.

The information that follows is a summary of the work of the small groups. As discussed with the meeting participants, all consensus points are recorded and posted on the district website to share the group work during the course of the strategic planning process.

Small Group Consensus: Strengths, Achievements & Challenges

Group #1:

Strengths	Challenges
Community created by engaged staff and counselors	Bridging the connection between teachers and parents for student progress
Community through upperclassman support	Counseling goals that target those who may not raise their hands
Staff empowerment for curriculum creativity	2/3 of students are involved-what about the 1/3 of students who are not? Dedicated strategies to engage at a level that involves, prevents anxiety or other mental health issues.
Learning strategies	Teaching school processes to both parents and students -How to apply -How to make a schedule -How to have a four-year roadmap (in pencil)
Course offerings	
Dual enrollment opportunities	

Group #2:

Strengths	Challenges
Technology forward	Mental health/counseling support
Diversity in course offerings	Implementation of cell phone ban
Meeting the needs of a variety of students	Harnessing AI to stay current
Flexible educational pathways	Preparing for career changes
Strong, motivated staff	Face to face communication
Athletics/extracurricular activities	Increased enrollment and traffic
	Athletics-ratio of students to teams

Group #3:

Strengths	Challenges
Students have an opportunity to find themselves	Supporting the needs of a diverse population
Outreach communications	Staff shortage/leave replacements
Innovative thinking (getting ahead, AI)	Increased health care costs
Career readiness	Emotional safety of students
Staff and faculty are amazing	How to manage AI
Create opportunities for staff to improve	Co-curricular outreach to community
Students' voices are heard	Need for an App

Group #4:

Strengths	Challenges
Positive reputation of the school	Sense of belonging-race
Strong curriculum -Breadth and depth -AP/Honors -Electives	Mental Health
Extra-curricular/club involvement	Student academic achievement
80-minute block schedule	NJ testing landscape
Unit Lunch	Unit lunch -enough room and supervision?
Security/Safety	Security/Safety
Class size	
Staff credentials	

Group #5:

Strengths	Challenges
Relationships	Safety
Resources	Teacher retention
Culture of learning	Budget/finances
Campus/Physical Plant	Enhancing/restoring academic standards (post-covid)
Curricular and co-curricular offerings	Student engagement
Dedicated staff	AI + cell phones + tech
College counseling	Communication
Administrative responsiveness	External and societal divisiveness
Innovation	Mental health supports
State NJGPA/AP	Inconsistent discipline

Group #6:

Strengths	Challenges
Student voice is valued	Lack of unification with sending districts (regionalization)
Academic programming	Out of district and Vo Tech student costs
Many opportunities with property size	Having services to support students in-district
Dual enrollment/1+1/AP Programs	Connecting with community businesses
Vo tech/Magnet classes	
Expert staff	
Responsiveness to community concerns	

Group #7:

Strengths	Challenges
Technology - -wifi, Chromebooks	AI-readiness and career
Campus facilities	Student engagement block <i>during</i> the school day
Wide variety of program choices	Increasing participation in clubs
AP courses	Alternative approaches to discipline
Dual enrollment	Mental health services decreased
Materials: paper, pencils, lab supplies	Only 1 staff member for career and college
Welcoming 8 th grade students	Alumni feedback and data beyond first year
IMC - -media specialists	Population increase
House model per grade level	Alumni newsletter
Makerspace, TED spaces	Drug policies-updated and re-examined

Group #8:

Strengths	Challenges
Number of activities/athletics and student participation in them	Decreasing enrollment (Polytech runoff)
Size of student population with a 10:1 student: teacher ratio	Succession planning
Dual enrollment, AP, etc.	Decreased testing scores
Safe space on campus (counseling, staff, etc.)	Differences in sending district's instructional programs
Team classes and special education support	Differences in instruction between same subjects in district
Variety of courses/curriculum	Cell phone law
Student pride and sense and belonging	Student attention span (phones, screens, social media, etc.)
Improved communication	Increasing MLL students, need for new strategies
Diversity	Campus safety (cars)
Campus as a learning space inside and outdoors	Engaging the 1/3 of students who are not involved

Group #9:

Strengths	Challenges
Paths of educational opportunities	Traffic pattern
Staff retention	Continuing to individualize education for all students
Course offerings	Rising costs (healthcare, benefits, transportation) effecting budget
Fiscally sound budget	Interaction with sending districts
Student opportunities	Declining enrollment effects
Facilities maintained and shared well	Bathroom access
Faculty accolades	Funding for clubs
Student: Teacher ratio	Misinformation/disinformation and polarization
Activities and clubs	Scheduling balance and guidance

Group #10:

Strengths	Challenges
Helpful staff -maintenance	Age of infrastructure/facilities -room temperature -copiers
Curriculum -AP, dual enrollment, diverse course offerings, makerspace, opportunities for students to explore	Lack of JROTC
Career counseling	Unit lunches-places to sit, timing
Wellness programs and staff supports	Security
Academic performance	Cell phone policy consistency
House structure provides small school feeling/supports with a diversity of opportunities	Morning drop-off traffic
	Curriculum pacing

Group #11:

Strengths	Challenges
Administration	Seating in cafeteria
Dual enrollment	Understaffed college counseling
AP program	Mental health program cut (fewer counselors)
Magnet program	Need for universal phone policy
Cellphone policy	Dress code
Communication	Need for multiple marking periods
Athletics/activities	Consistent entering of student grades
Teacher availability for tutorial	Time period allowed to turn in homework
Diverse cafeteria menu	Need for more tutorial days or to change schedule to semesters and blocks
Student events	Late buses-number and drop off locations

Group #12:

Strengths	Challenges
Personalized learning experiences	Healthcare
Quality and quantity of programs	AI use
Communication	Overwhelming options (courses and activities)
Knowledge base of all staff	Length of some bus commutes
Superintendent and Principal	
Makerspace	
(Expanding) Magnet Programs	
Updates to facilities and infrastructure	
Responsiveness to feedback	
Increased security measures-physical and digital	

Group #13:

Strengths	Challenges
Diversity of academic offerings	Consistently changing state assessments
Diversity of curricular offerings/experiences	Health and operational costs
Communication	Negative influence of social media, all media
Community leader	Regional school district
Steady staff (teaching, counseling and administration)	Declining enrollment
Strong capital reserves and financial planning	Some aging facilities
Polite, thoughtful, engaging students	Bringing varying views together productively
Numbers-enrollment, staff	Support for marginalized students
Staff prioritizing growth	Whole school spirit
Keeping kids in school (96% rate)	Recruiting, hiring and retaining staff that reflect the student body

Group #14:

Strengths	Challenges
Budget reserves (financially stable)	Declining enrollment
Rich curriculum offerings	Increasing percentage of students who require additional support
Extracurricular offerings	Rising costs across the board (along with eroding funding)
Multitude of leadership opportunities for students	Large school can also mean students can get lost
High quality and passionate staff	Use of electronic devices + lack of student interactions
Strong counseling support	Changing job outlook
	Target keeps changing

Group #15:

Strengths	Challenges
Staff-supported PD, advanced degrees, great inter-staff respect	Students leaving for other districts
Quality of athletic coaches and support staff	Enrollment decreased by 1,000 in 10 years but is projected to go back up despite budget dropping/costs going up
Facilities are largely clean and upkept, issues are quickly addressed	Staff retention
Variety of programs of studies, plus co-curriculars and athletics	Block schedule-length of time and A/B class scheduling
IMC-offerings for students in media literacy and design thinking	Lunches-seating and supervision are a challenge despite positivity of unit lunch
Student "internships" in IMC, Hub, counseling, school store	New cell phone policy

2026 Hunterdon Central Regional High School District Strategic Planning Meeting #1 Outcomes

Various programs for all learning needs (EKWIPS, AABLE, ASPIRE, ML, 12+)	
Articulation with sending districts	
Security and safety team-personable and knowledgeable	

Following each group reporting out on their consensus points, the large group identified the following **common themes**:

Common Themes - Strengths	Common Themes - Challenges
Community	Emotional safety
Academic offerings	Inclusion/belonging
Faculty and staff	Using AI
Facilities	Mental health
Student voices	Increasing healthcare costs
2/3 of students are involved in activities	1/3 of students are not involved in activities
Career counseling	Unit lunches
Good curriculum offerings	Budgeting for increasing costs
Teacher availability	Cell phones
Positive interaction with the community	Cafeteria seating
	Traffic
	Security/safety

In addition to the common themes identified in the above chart, in typing up this report several others were noted. Further common strengths included extracurricular offerings, technology, and advanced learning (AP, Honors, Magnet, Dual Enrollment, etc). A challenge included alignment with sending districts.

The second strategic planning session is scheduled for:

Wednesday, March 11, 2026, at 6:00 pm

Sign-in begins at 5:45 pm.

The Commons, 11/12 Campus

Meetings #2 and #3 are scheduled for 1.5 hours. Meetings start and end promptly.

During the March 11th meeting, participants will create a shared vision together for the future of the Hunterdon Central Regional High School District. We will talk about 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!