



South Orange – Maplewood School District

Strategic Planning Meeting #2 Outcomes Report

April 15, 2026

Mission Statement

The South Orange & Maplewood School District's mission is to awaken potential by inspiring students to imagine boldly, pursue their passions with purpose, and work together to create a brighter future. We do this by cultivating a learner-centered environment, opening multiple pathways to success, and reimagining the structures, systems, and supports that shape learning. Through innovative teaching, genuine partnership with families, and the collective wisdom of our community, we prepare our students not only to thrive but to lead, create, and transform the world they inherit.

What are the Visions of the South Orange - Maplewood School District?

On April 15, 2026, South Orange - Maplewood District administrators, staff, parents/guardians, and community members, twenty-five (25) in all, came together to initiate strategic planning. The topic for the second meeting was focused on developing a vision and initiatives toward achieving that vision, for the South Orange - Maplewood School District. The meeting began with a welcome and introduction by Superintendent Bing. Facilitator Jeanne Cleary, from the New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA), was introduced and provided an overview of the strategic planning process and the focus for the evening's activity.

We reviewed the consensus process utilized in strategic planning. The topic for the evening focused on creating a shared vision for the South Orange - Maplewood School District. We were asked to imagine — what if, in five years' time, at the maturation of the strategic plan we are creating, South Orange - Maplewood School District had become a nationally recognized school district for providing educational excellence for its students? What if the national media was writing about the district so public-school districts nationwide could emulate what happens here?

Participants gathered in randomly assigned groups, four (4) groups in total, to develop a shared vision and initiatives. After group discussion, each group identified their consensus points and presented those to the full group of meeting participants. The group then identified the four (4) Goal Areas which will be the focus of Meeting #3.

Group Consensus: Vision & Initiatives

Group 1

Title “SOMSD is 100 for 100! “Where all teachers and students get what they need to thrive.”

Vision Teachers express confidence in diverse pedagogy to meet all student needs. Students express feeling engaged and challenged in their own development and education. Students and staff are proud that their well-maintained facilities are conducive to a flexible and motivating learning environment. SOMSD programs are inquiry based, student-centered, and provide experience for any field they wish to pursue. All students and staff feel safe to practice their durable and soft skills progressively from Kindergarten through 12th grade. They feel confident in their adaptability, resilience, and collaboration. There is a consistent and thoughtful partnership between parents, students, staff, community, administrations, and schools. Students graduate with a healthy and productive relationship with technology.

Initiatives

- Facility Maintenance & Financial Stability
- College, Life & Career Readiness
- Supporting SEL, Neurodiversity & Student First (Whole Child)
- Curriculum & Teaching
- Community, Culture & Collaboration

Group 2

Title / Vision **“District Achieves 100% Graduation Rate with Highest Student Satisfaction Rate in the Nation”**

Initiatives

- Robust programs for differentiating for the whole child.
- District-wide professional development focused on belonging/seeing and supporting the whole child academically, social/emotionally, culturally.
- Teachers collaborate to engage in innovative instructional methods and embody high expectations for each student, regardless of predictive data.
- High quality data analysis informs decision-making.
- Systems for meaningful community engagement from parents, local organizations, town and district resources.
- State-of-the-art facilities.

Group 3

Title / Vision **“Community. Collaboration. Communication. Commitment. South Orange-Maplewood School District Brings Support to All Students, Increasing Graduation Rates of all Students.”**

Initiatives

- Consistent meetings between grade levels, subject specific and cross-subject and cross-town buildings monthly.
- On-going, intentional education for staff and administrators on neurodiversity.
- Empowering master teachers to turn-key and provide education and support to staff on a topic they are experts in. This will be supported and encouraged by admin.
- Scope and sequence, vertical-articulation, clear expectations and communication between educators and community.
- Maintain consistency in curriculum.
- Early intervention services in the elementary grades to support opportunity gaps and provide support for any academic needs.
- Neuro-affirming, child-centered (human-centered).
- Providing a safe space for all staff and students to thrive.

Groups 4 - 5 Were combined with other groups.

Group 6

Title	“SOMSD Shines by Developing Society-Ready Students Through Nimble and Responsive Curriculum, Efficient Use of Resources, and Widespread Community Support.”
Vision	Society-ready citizens. Financial stability & reduction of deferred maintenance. Equitable access. Widespread community support. Welcoming spaces - (infrastructure and people) everyone wants to be there! Tech preparedness but not reliance.
Initiatives	▪ Personalized pathways, college and vocational; ethics/philosophy as core of curriculum. ▪ Retain teachers; move programs in house; reduce outsourcing; Identify and address critical infrastructure project. ▪ Universal pre-k.

Groups 7 -10 Were combined with other groups.

Common Themes

Following the small groups reporting out to the full group, four (4) broad goal areas were identified and agreed to through a consensus model by the attendees:

1. A strong and sustainable infrastructure for our schools.
2. Equitable access to learning.
3. Pathways to success – college, society and career readiness.
4. Active partnerships among all stakeholders – students, staff, parents, administration and community.

**The third Strategic Plan session is scheduled for
Monday, May 11, 2026.**

During the May 11th meeting, participants will review the outcomes from Meetings 1 (Strengths and Opportunities / Challenges) and Meeting 2 (Visions and Initiatives) and develop strategic planning goals and objectives for the South Orange – Maplewood School District .

Attendees will have the opportunity to work with any one of the goal areas listed above. Prior participation is not required.