Lakewood Forward:
A Five-Year Strategic Plan for Fiscal Sustainability, Responsible Governance, and Student Success



Lakewood School District
2026-2031

This Five-Year Strategic Plan is a living document that will be reviewed and updated periodically to reflect the evolving needs, priorities, data, and goals of the Lakewood School District. ***(Last revised on August 29, 2026)***

Prepared for:
Lakewood Board of Education

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Strategic Planning Participants

The Lakewood School District Five-Year Strategic Plan was developed through a collaborative and comprehensive planning process involving district leadership and key administrative personnel. This strategic planning process was designed to evaluate the District's current programs, identify priorities, and establish a clear vision for continuous improvement over the next five years.

Throughout the development of this plan, participants:

- Reviewed student achievement, operational, fiscal, and organizational data;
- Evaluated current programs, services, and district initiatives;
- Identified strengths, challenges, and opportunities for growth;
- Established strategic priorities and measurable goals; and
- Engaged in ongoing professional discussions regarding future initiatives to support student success and organizational effectiveness.

This Strategic Plan remained an active working document for several months and was refined through continuous collaboration, professional dialogue, and feedback from district administrators. The final plan reflects the collective expertise, professional judgment, and shared commitment of the individuals who participated in its development.

The Superintendent extends sincere appreciation to all participants for their dedication, professionalism, and valuable contributions throughout this process. Their knowledge and expertise have been instrumental in establishing a strategic vision that will guide the Lakewood School District over the next five years.

Strategic Planning Participants

The following individuals participated in the development of this Five-Year Strategic Plan in various capacities, including the analysis of data, program evaluation, budget development, operational planning, professional collaboration, and strategic decision-making:

- Dr. Laura A. Winters – Superintendent of Schools
- Kevin Campbell – Business Administrator; Budget Development and Fiscal Planning
- Kristie Sussino – Assistant Business Administrator; Budget Development and Fiscal Planning
- Amy Bearden – Transportation Manager; Transportation Planning
- Michelle DiPietro – Supervisor of Child Study Teams
- Adina Weisz – Supervisor of Special Services
- Devorie Stareshefsky – Supervisor of Special Education, Instruction

- Heni Mozes – Supervisor of Early Childhood Education (PK) and Special Education Programs (PK),Oversight of NJDOE Mixed Delivery Preschools
- Malka Stein – Supervisor of STEM & Adult High School
- Tracy Paolantonio – Director of Curriculum & Instruction
- Tova Feifer – Supervisor of Early Elementary Education
- Kevin Walters – Supervisor of Humanities & Supervisor of Humanities & District Anti-Bullying Coordinator

The Five-Year Strategic Plan was presented to the Board of Education and approved by the Board in April 2026. Following Board approval, the plan has remained under advisement, which has delayed its broader public release. Once the review process has concluded, the District intends to translate the Strategic Plan, distribute it to students, families, staff, and community stakeholders, and actively solicit feedback to support ongoing implementation and continuous improvement.

Living Document

This Five-Year Strategic Plan is intended to serve as a living document. As district priorities evolve, new initiatives are implemented, data are analyzed, and additional recommendations are received, the plan may be revised to reflect changing needs, emerging opportunities, and continuous improvement efforts.

Future updates will acknowledge the ongoing contributions of district personnel and stakeholders who participate in the planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the District's strategic initiatives. The Superintendent is committed to ensuring that this document remains responsive to the educational needs of the Lakewood School District and continues to serve as a roadmap for achieving the District's mission, vision, and long-term goals.

Executive Summary

The Lakewood School District recognizes the importance of maintaining both fiscal responsibility and compliance with state and federal mandates while ensuring that all students receive a Thorough and Efficient education as required under the New Jersey Constitution and N.J.S.A. 18A.

The District operates within a unique demographic and financial structure unlike any other district in the State of New Jersey. A significant portion of the District's expenditures are mandated costs outside of local control, particularly in the areas of:

- Nonpublic School Services (Grant Funding)
- Transportation
- Special Education Placements
- Charter Schools
- State Aid Loan Repayment

The proposed Five-Year Strategic Stability and Cost Management Plan outlines a collaborative pathway to:

- Stabilize district finances
- Expand in-district programming
- Improve student achievement
- Strengthen governance and operational oversight
- Reduce costs where the District has direct control

The District remains committed to working collaboratively with the NJDOE and State Monitors to ensure that fiscal oversight measures do not compromise educational services for public school students.

This strategic plan was developed with consideration of the recommendations provided by the New Jersey Department of Education's PCG Report and the State Monitors (4) appointed by the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) to oversee aspects of the Lakewood Public School District.

Summary of the Lakewood School District

The Lakewood School District serves the Township of Lakewood and operates one of the most unique educational systems in New Jersey due to its highly disproportionate public and nonpublic school populations. The District currently enrolls approximately 4,000 students (Realtime) in its public schools, while approximately 52,189 students attend nonpublic schools within Lakewood township in approximately 154 nonpublic schools (26-27 NJDOE Nonpublic Security Grant).

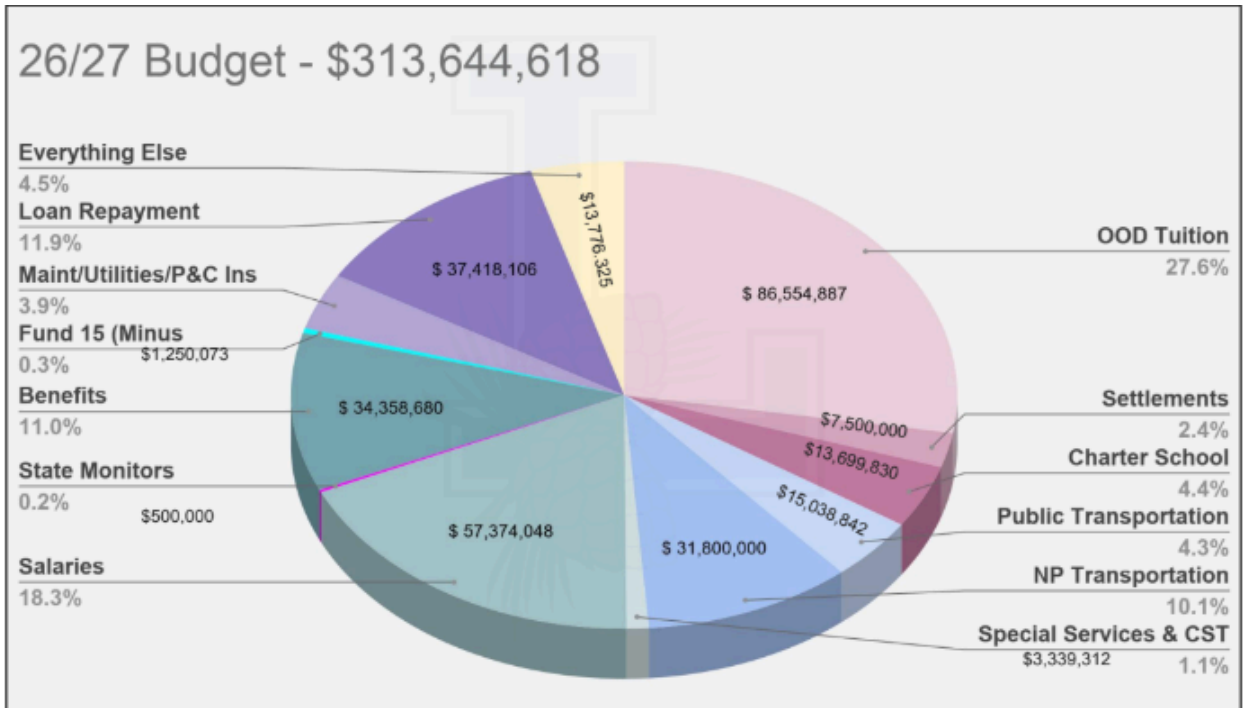
Although the District directly educates a relatively small portion of the township's school-aged population, it maintains significant statutory responsibilities for nonpublic school students, including transportation, special education services and federally and state-funded programs. This structure requires the District to administer educational services and oversight for tens of thousands of additional students attending more than one hundred and fifty nonpublic schools, making its operational scope far broader than its public school enrollment alone might suggest.

Lakewood's public school population reflects a high-needs student demographic, including large numbers of multilingual learners, students requiring specialized academic interventions, and students with disabilities. The District is committed to providing a thorough and efficient education for its enrolled students while simultaneously fulfilling its statutory obligations to support nonpublic school students throughout the township.

Because of this unique educational landscape—where the majority of school-aged children attend nonpublic institutions—Lakewood operates within a distinct educational and fiscal framework that requires strategic planning, efficient resource management, and strong collaboration with community partners. The District's Five-Year Strategic Plan is designed to strengthen academic programs, expand in-district services, enhance operational efficiency, and ensure long-term fiscal sustainability while meeting the educational needs of both its public school students and the broader community it serves.

Fiscal Context

The District's financial structure is heavily impacted by costs that are mandated by statute and regulation and are not subject to local control.



Source: Budget Presentation, April 29, 2026 (Adopted)

Major Cost Drivers:

2026-2027 Budget Mandates	Projected Costs
Charter School	$13,699,830
Out-of-District Tuition	$86,554,887
Settlements	$7,500,000
Public Transportation	$15,038,842
Nonpublic Transportation	$31,800,000
State Monitors	$500,000.00
State Aid Repayment	$37,418,106

Total Mandated Costs	$192,511,665
Projected Loan for 2026-2027	$132,817,491

Source: Budget Presentation, April 29, 2026 (Adopted)

For the 2026–2027 budget, approximately:

$192,511,665 represents mandated expenditures outside the District's control.

In addition, the District anticipates a state aid loan of approximately **$132,817,491**, further illustrating the structural fiscal imbalance.

This plan focuses on reducing costs within the District's control while advocating for structural solutions for mandated costs.

Socioeconomic and Demographic Factors

The District serves a student population with significant needs, including:
- High levels of economic disadvantage
- Multilingual learners
- A high number of students with disabilities requiring special education services

- Students requiring intensive academic and behavioral supports

Many students require individualized support, specialized instruction, and related services in order to access the curriculum and make appropriate academic progress. These factors require the District to provide additional instructional support, intervention services, and specialized programming to meet student needs and ensure compliance with federal and state special education requirements.

Strategic Priority 1

Expansion of In-District Special Education Programs

Vision

The Lakewood School District will expand high-quality in-district special education programs based on students' identified needs and Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). When appropriate, these programs will allow students to remain in their home district, receive required services, participate in the school community, and access opportunities to learn alongside nondisabled peers.

Goals

1. Expand appropriate in-district special education programming based on student enrollment, identified needs, and IEP requirements.
2. Reduce reliance on out-of-district placements when the District can appropriately meet a student's individual educational, behavioral, and related-service needs.
3. Ensure that programs are culturally responsive, accessible to families, and supportive of meaningful parent participation.
4. Improve student outcomes and expand opportunities for inclusion with nondisabled peers, when appropriate.
5. Promote long-term fiscal sustainability by reducing tuition and transportation costs associated with out-of-district placements while maintaining appropriate services and supports for students.

District Oversight and Program Administration

All expanded in-district special education programs will remain under the authority of the Lakewood Board of Education and the supervision of District Administration. Programs will be developed and operated based on student needs, IEP requirements, appropriate staffing, available space, regulatory requirements, and District resources.

The District will maintain responsibility for program oversight, implementation, monitoring, and accountability. All programs will operate in accordance with District policies, New Jersey Department of Education requirements, applicable State and federal special education laws, and each student's IEP.

The Lakewood School District will ensure that:

- Special education teachers, paraprofessionals, related-service providers, and other qualified personnel provide instructional, behavioral, and therapeutic services in accordance with students' IEPs.
- District administrators and special education supervisors regularly oversee programs through walkthroughs, program reviews, and compliance monitoring.
- Instruction, behavioral supports, accommodations, modifications, and related services align with District curriculum standards, N.J.A.C. 6A:14, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and other applicable requirements.
- The District maintains direct oversight of staffing, program implementation, student progress monitoring, service delivery, and family communication.
- Placement decisions are made by each student's IEP team based on the student's individual needs and the requirement to provide a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment.
- In-district placement is considered only when the District can appropriately implement the student's IEP and provide the required programs, services, and supports.
- Programs are evaluated regularly to determine whether students are receiving appropriate services and making meaningful progress toward their IEP goals.

Program Monitoring

The District will implement a structured monitoring system that includes:

- Regular program walkthroughs conducted by District supervisors and administrators;
- Review of student progress data, IEP implementation, and service-delivery records;
- Monitoring of staffing levels, certifications, class sizes, and program resources;
- Compliance reviews to ensure adherence to State and federal special education requirements;
- Evaluation of student outcomes and opportunities for appropriate inclusion;
- Ongoing communication and collaboration with parents and guardians; and
- Periodic review of program effectiveness, capacity, and continuing student needs.

These oversight practices will help ensure that expanded in-district programs maintain high standards of instructional quality, accountability, and regulatory compliance**.**

Commitment to Students and Families

The Lakewood School District remains committed to providing high-quality, culturally responsive special education programs that meet students' individual needs and support meaningful family participation. By expanding appropriate in-district programming under the leadership and supervision of District personnel, the District will strengthen services for students

with disabilities, increase appropriate inclusion opportunities, and allow more students to remain within their home district when consistent with their IEPs.

Community Partnerships and Mixed Delivery Preschool Opportunities

As part of the District's commitment to expanding educational opportunities for Lakewood students, the Lakewood School District will continue to develop partnerships that support its educational mission and respond to identified student and community needs.

Subject to available funding and all applicable requirements, the District may partner with eligible community-based providers to participate in New Jersey Department of Education grant-funded Mixed Delivery Preschool programs.

Through these partnerships, the District seeks to:

- Strengthen community-based educational partnerships;
- Increase the availability of high-quality early childhood programs;
- Expand access to NJDOE-funded preschool opportunities for eligible students;
- Support continuity of services for students and families;
- Provide culturally responsive and accessible preschool programming; and
- Coordinate preschool and special education services based on students' identified needs and IEPs, when applicable.

Participation in the Mixed Delivery Preschool Program will remain contingent upon:

- Satisfaction of all applicable NJDOE preschool program requirements;
- Compliance with State licensing, health, safety, staffing, and program standards;
- Demonstration of high-quality early childhood instructional practices;
- Availability of NJDOE grant funding;
- Completion of all applicable procurement and provider-selection procedures; and
- Approval of appropriate contracts or agreements by the Lakewood Board of Education and State Monitor.

The District will ensure that all Mixed Delivery Preschool programs operate in accordance with the oversight, supervision, curriculum, programmatic standards, and accountability requirements established by the Lakewood School District and the New Jersey Department of Education. Participation as a provider will be evaluated independently and will not confer preference or entitlement in connection with any other District program or contract.

Year	Objective	Actions	Person(s) Responsible	Start Date	Completion Date	Measure
YEAR 1 (2026-2027)						
1	Expand appropriate in-district special education programs based on students' identified needs and IEPs, reducing reliance on out-of-district placements when the District can appropriately provide the required programs and services.	**Conduct a districtwide needs and capacity analysis to identify:** • Students currently placed in out-of-district programs; • Students whose needs may be appropriately met through an in-district program, as determined by their IEP teams; • Projected student enrollment and disability classifications; • Program types, instructional models, and related services needed; • Available instructional space within District schools; • Required staffing, certifications, equipment, materials, and professional development; and • Potential tuition and transportation cost reductions. **Develop program frameworks addressing:** • Student eligibility and placement criteria; • Appropriate class sizes and student-to-staff ratios; • Specialized instruction and curriculum; • Related-service delivery;	Superintendent Supervisors of Special Services, Child Study Teams, Special Education and Early Childhood Education Building Administration	July 1, 2026	June 30, 2027	Completion of districtwide needs and capacity analysis; • Identification of programs appropriate for expansion or development; • Number and types of in-district programs established or expanded; • Number of additional students appropriately served in-district; • Student progress toward IEP goals; • Increased opportunities for appropriate inclusion; • Parent and family participation in the transition process; and • Documented reductions in out-of-district tuition and transportation costs.

		• Behavioral, therapeutic, and nursing supports; • Opportunities for participation with nondisabled peers, when appropriate; • Family communication and participation; and • Student progress monitoring and program evaluation. **Implement expanded in-district programming by:** • Determining which programs can be implemented safely and appropriately within existing District schools; • Securing required Board, State Monitor, and NJDOE approvals, when applicable; • Recruiting or assigning appropriately certified and qualified staff; • Providing necessary training, materials, equipment, and supports; • Convening IEP team meetings before making any change in student placement; and • Transitioning eligible students to appropriate in-district programs when consistent with their individual needs and IEPs.				

Year	Objective	Actions	Person(s) Responsible	Start Date	Completion Date	Measure
YEAR 2 (2027-2028)						
2	Continue expanding appropriate in-district special education programs based on student needs, IEP requirements, program effectiveness, enrollment, and available District resources.	**Evaluate Year 1 implementation by reviewing:** • Student progress toward IEP goals; • Program enrollment, capacity, and staffing; • Delivery of specialized instruction and related services; • Behavioral, therapeutic, and nursing supports; • Opportunities for participation with nondisabled peers; • Family feedback and participation; • Regulatory compliance; and • Tuition and transportation cost reductions. **Update the districtwide needs and capacity analysis to identify:** • Students continuing to receive services in out-of-district placements; • Students whose needs may be appropriately met in-district, as determined by their IEP teams; • Changes in enrollment, disability classifications, and required services; • Additional or expanded program types needed; • Available instructional	Superintendent Supervisors of Special Services, Child Study Teams, Special Education and Early Childhood Education Building Administration	July 1, 2027	June 30, 2028	Completion of the Year 1 program evaluation and updated needs analysis; • Number and types of in-district programs continued, expanded, or established; • Number of additional students appropriately served in-district; • Student progress toward IEP goals; • Program compliance and service-delivery data; • Increased opportunities for appropriate inclusion; • Family feedback and participation; and • Documented reductions in out-of-district tuition and transportation costs.

		space within District schools; and • Staffing, certification, training, equipment, and resource needs. **Continue program development and implementation by:** • Expanding successful Year 1 programs when supported by student needs and outcome data; • Developing additional in-district programs when warranted; • Establishing appropriate administrative and supervisory oversight; • Maintaining appropriate class sizes and student-to-staff ratios; • Strengthening related services and behavioral supports; • Recruiting and retaining appropriately certified and qualified personnel; • Providing staff training, materials, equipment, and program supports; • Increasing appropriate inclusion opportunities; and • Convening IEP team meetings before making any change in student placement.				

Year	Objective	Actions	Person(s) Responsible	Start Date	Completion Date	Measure
YEAR 3 (2028-2029)						
3	Strengthen, refine, and expand effective in-district special education programs based on student outcomes, IEP requirements, enrollment trends, program capacity, and available District resources.	**Evaluate the effectiveness of existing in-district programs by reviewing:** • Student progress toward IEP goals; • Academic, functional, behavioral, and social-emotional outcomes; • Program enrollment, capacity, and staffing stability; • Implementation of specialized instruction and related services; • Opportunities for participation with nondisabled peers; • Family feedback and participation; • Staff feedback and professional-development needs; • State and federal compliance data; and • Tuition and transportation cost reductions. **Update the districtwide needs and capacity analysis to identify:**	Superintendent Supervisors of Special Services, Child Study Teams, Special Education and Early Childhood Education Building Administration	July 1, 2028	June 30, 2029	• Completion of an annual program evaluation and updated needs analysis; • Number and types of programs continued, refined, expanded, or established; • Number of students appropriately served in-district; • Student progress toward IEP goals and other identified outcomes; • Program capacity, staffing, and service-delivery data; • Increased opportunities for appropriate inclusion; • Family and staff feedback; • Compliance with State and federal requirements; and • Documented reductions in out-of-district tuition and transportation costs.

		• Students continuing to receive services in out-of-district placements; • Students whose needs may be appropriately met in-district, as determined by their IEP teams; • Emerging student needs and changes in enrollment or disability classifications; • Programs requiring expansion, modification, consolidation, or additional support; • Available instructional space within District schools; and • Staffing, certification, equipment, technology, training, and resource needs. **Strengthen program quality and sustainability by:** • Expanding programs supported by demonstrated student needs and positive outcome data; • Refining instructional, behavioral, therapeutic, and related-service models; • Strengthening administrative and				

		supervisory oversight; • Maintaining appropriate class sizes and student-to-staff ratios; • Recruiting and retaining appropriately certified and qualified personnel; • Providing targeted professional development and coaching; • Increasing appropriate inclusion opportunities; • Strengthening transitions between grade levels and programs; • Maintaining ongoing communication and collaboration with families; and • Convening IEP team meetings before making any change in student placement.				

Year	Objective	Actions	Person(s) Responsible	Start Date	Completion Date	Measure
YEAR 4 (2029-2030)						
4	Sustain and enhance a comprehensive continuum of high-quality in-district special education programs based on student needs, IEP requirements,	**Conduct a comprehensive review of the District's in-district special education continuum by evaluating:** • Student progress toward IEP goals; • Academic, functional,	Superintendent Supervisors of Special Services, Child Study Teams, Special Education and Early Childhood Education	July 1, 2029	June 30, 2030	Completion of a comprehensive review of the in-district special education continuum; • Number and types of programs sustained, refined, expanded, or

	program outcomes, enrollment trends, and available District resources.	behavioral, and social-emotional outcomes; • Program enrollment, capacity, and projected needs; • Staffing levels, certifications, retention, and professional-development needs; • Delivery of specialized instruction, related services, and student supports; • Opportunities for participation with nondisabled peers; • Student transitions between schools, grade levels, and programs; • Family and staff feedback; • State and federal compliance data; and • Tuition and transportation cost reductions. **Strengthen the continuity, quality, and sustainability of programs by:** • Continuing, refining, or expanding programs supported by student needs and outcome data; • Modifying programs that are not producing the intended student outcomes; • Strengthening instructional, behavioral, therapeutic, and related-service practices; • Maintaining appropriate class sizes and	Building Administration			modified; • Number and percentage of students appropriately served in-district; • Student progress toward IEP goals and other identified outcomes; • Program capacity, staffing stability, and service-delivery data; • Increased opportunities for appropriate inclusion; • Improved transition outcomes; • Family and staff feedback; • Compliance with State and federal requirements; and • Documented reductions in out-of-district tuition and transportation costs.

		student-to-staff ratios; • Strengthening administrative and supervisory accountability; • Developing staff recruitment, retention, succession, and professional-development strategies; • Expanding appropriate inclusion opportunities and supports; • Strengthening transition planning for students preparing for secondary education, postsecondary education, employment, or adult services; • Maintaining ongoing communication and collaboration with families; and • Convening IEP team meetings before making any change in student placement.				

Year	Objective	Actions	Person(s) Responsible	Start Date	Completion Date	Measure
YEAR 5 (2030-2031)						
5	Evaluate the five-year expansion of in-district special education programming, sustain effective programs, and establish priorities for the District's next strategic planning	**Conduct a comprehensive five-year evaluation addressing:** • Student progress toward IEP goals; • Academic, functional, behavioral, social-emotional, and transition outcomes;	Superintendent Supervisors of Special Services, Child Study Teams, Special Education and Early Childhood Education Building	July 1, 2030	June 30, 2031	• Completion and public presentation of a five-year program evaluation; • Number and types of programs sustained, refined, expanded, consolidated, or discontinued; • Number and percentage of

	cycle.	• The number and percentage of students appropriately served in-district; • Changes in the number and types of out-of-district placements; • Program enrollment, capacity, and long-term student needs; • Delivery of specialized instruction, related services, and student supports; • Opportunities for participation with nondisabled peers; • Staffing levels, certifications, retention, and professional-development needs; • Family and staff feedback; • State and federal compliance data; and • Tuition, transportation, staffing, and program costs. **Establish a long-term sustainability and improvement plan by:** • Continuing programs supported by student needs, compliance data, and positive outcomes; • Refining, expanding,	Administration			students appropriately served in-district; • Student progress toward IEP goals and other identified outcomes; • Changes in out-of-district placements; • Increased opportunities for appropriate inclusion; • Improved transition outcomes; • Program capacity, staffing stability, and service-delivery data; • Family and staff feedback; • Compliance with State and federal requirements; • Documented fiscal impact, including tuition and transportation cost reductions; and • Adoption of recommendations and measurable priorities for the next strategic planning cycle.

		consolidating, or discontinuing programs based on documented evidence; • Identifying emerging student needs and projected enrollment trends; • Maintaining appropriate class sizes and student-to-staff ratios; • Strengthening instructional, behavioral, therapeutic, and related-service practices; • Developing long-term staffing, recruitment, retention, succession, and professional-development strategies; • Sustaining and expanding appropriate inclusion opportunities; • Strengthening transitions among schools, grade levels, programs, and postsecondary settings; • Maintaining ongoing communication and collaboration with families; • Convening IEP team meetings before making any change in student placement; and • Developing recommendations and measurable priorities for the District's next five-year strategic plan.				

Special Education Cost Management

Goal

Expand in-district special education programs to reduce reliance on high-cost out-of-district placements while maintaining full IDEA compliance.

Key Actions

Expansion of In-District Programs

The District currently operates a full continuum of special education programs including:

- Preschool Disabled (PSD)
- In-Class Resource (ICR)
- Resource Pullout
- Autism Programs
- Multiple Disabilities (MD) Programs
- Learning and Language Disabilities (LLD) Programs
- Secondary Special Classes

These programs are located at:

- Spruce Street School
- Oak Street School
- Clifton Avenue Grade School
- Lakewood Middle School
- Lakewood High School

Five-Year Targets

- Reduce out-of-district placements by 20 percent or more, when appropriate and consistent with students' individual needs and IEPs.
- Increase the number and capacity of high-quality in-district special education programs based on student enrollment, identified needs, available space, staffing, and District resources.
- Increase the number and percentage of students with disabilities appropriately served in District programs.
- Expand early childhood intervention and preschool special education opportunities, including appropriate inclusion opportunities through the NJDOE-funded Mixed Delivery Preschool Program.
- Demonstrate improved student outcomes, increased progress toward IEP goals, and long-term reductions in out-of-district tuition and transportation costs.

Alignment of Nonpublic IDEA Programs to Support a Comprehensive Continuum of Services

The Lakewood School District will conduct a comprehensive review and alignment of all Nonpublic IDEA programs and services to ensure that available resources are strategically utilized to support a cohesive continuum of special education services that best meets the needs of all students residing in Lakewood.

Through this process, the District will evaluate current IDEA-funded services provided to nonpublic school students, including instructional supports, related services, and contracted provider programs, to ensure that services are effectively structured, compliant with federal regulations, and responsive to the evolving needs of students.

The District will work to ensure that IDEA resources are aligned to:

- Strengthen early intervention and support services
- Expand access to appropriate services across settings when permissible under IDEA regulations.
- Promote efficient use of federal funding
- Ensure equitable access to services for eligible students
- Support a coordinated continuum of special education services across the district

By aligning Nonpublic IDEA programming with the broader special education framework of the district, Lakewood will strengthen its ability to provide a well-coordinated system of support that addresses the diverse needs of students while maintaining compliance with federal and state special education requirements.

Written Monthly Special Education Program Review Presented to the Board (PK-12)

The Director of Special Education will implement monthly program reviews to ensure:

- IEPs align with student needs
- Placements reflect Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) requirements
- In-district placements are utilized whenever appropriate

Monthly Special Education Program Written Review (PK-12)

Due:	Persons Responsible	Provided to:	Include but not limit to:
Written Report due 5 working days prior to each monthly BOE meeting **Starting 9/2026**	Supervisor of Special Education Services	Superintendent of Schools, who will Provide a Superintendent's Monthly Report to the Board	Available special education seats by program New programs/classes needed Update on Leased Facilities Programs Number of inclusive Classrooms Ratio of general education students to students with disabilities LRE compliance Number of Due Process Cases Highlight Special Education programs, may include highlight videos

Capping Out-of-District Tuition and the Financial Impact

Goal

Advocate for greater transparency, accountability, and alignment between Individualized Education Program (IEP) mandates and Out-of-District (OOD) tuition costs to ensure that school districts are only responsible for paying for services required by a student's IEP.

Context

Out-of-District placements are sometimes necessary to ensure that students with disabilities receive a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). However, the current structure for determining OOD tuition rates often includes costs for services, programs, or staffing structures that are not directly required by individual students' IEPs.

Additionally, through the tuition rebill process, districts may be billed for services that were not specifically mandated within a student's IEP. These practices can significantly inflate tuition rates and place substantial financial strain on local school districts.

For districts with a high number of students requiring specialized services, these costs can represent one of the most significant drivers of special education expenditures.

Ensuring that tuition billing practices reflect only the services required to implement a student's IEP is critical to maintaining both fiscal responsibility and programmatic integrity.

Strategic Actions

The District will advocate at the state level for reforms that increase transparency and accountability in the determination of Out-of-District tuition rates, including:

• Requiring audits of Out-of-District tuition billing that include comparisons between services mandated in the student's IEP and the services actually provided.

• Ensuring that school districts are not billed for services that are not specifically required by the student's IEP.

• Requiring greater transparency in the rebill process, including clear documentation demonstrating that billed services were necessary for the implementation of the student's IEP.

• Advocating for statewide guidance that ensures tuition rates reflect actual educational services delivered rather than program structures or staffing models unrelated to individual student needs.

• Supporting policy changes that provide districts with the ability to challenge inappropriate rebilling practices when charges do not align with IEP mandates.

Expected Impact

By promoting greater accountability in the Out-of-District tuition determination process, the District seeks to:

- Ensure that public funds are used solely for services required to implement students' IEPs.
- Reduce unnecessary increases in special education tuition costs.
- Improve transparency and fiscal oversight within the special education funding system.
- Protect school districts from bearing costs for services that were not required or delivered.

Early Childhood and Preschool Program Expansion

Goal

Expand access to high-quality preschool services through the development of a coordinated mixed-delivery preschool system, while strategically utilizing increasing early identification and support for students with disabilities at the earliest possible age. This initiative is designed to strengthen school readiness, expand inclusive educational opportunities, and reduce the long-term need for costly out-of-district placements by providing culturally responsive early intervention services within the community.

Context

Research consistently demonstrates that high-quality early childhood education improves long-term academic outcomes, reduces the need for intensive interventions later in a student's educational career, and increases overall school readiness.

The Lakewood School District serves a rapidly growing population of young children and recognizes the importance of early identification and early intervention for students with developmental delays or disabilities.

Through the expansion of a mixed-delivery preschool model, the District will collaborate with community-based providers, licensed childcare centers, and Head Start programs to increase access to preschool services while maintaining high-quality instructional standards and strong program oversight.

This model allows children to receive services within community-based settings that are culturally familiar and accessible to families, while maintaining the instructional guidance, program standards, and accountability of the Lakewood School District.

In addition, the District will strategically utilize Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part B funds to ensure that preschool students with disabilities receive early special education services designed to support developmental growth and reduce the need for more intensive services in later grades.

Expanding early childhood services through culturally responsive community partnerships will also significantly reduce the number of students requiring out-of-district placements in later years. When developmental needs are addressed early, students are far more likely to succeed within district programs rather than requiring placement in external programs that are often more restrictive and significantly more costly.

By developing high-quality early childhood programs within community settings that families trust and feel comfortable accessing, the District can provide educationally appropriate services while strengthening relationships with families and community partners.

Over time, this approach will help the District:

- Improve long-term student outcomes
- Increase inclusive educational opportunities
- Reduce reliance on high-cost out-of-district placements
- Ensure that programs remain culturally appropriate and accessible to the community served

Guiding Principles

The District's preschool expansion will be guided by the following principles:

• Early Identification and Intervention
• Equitable Access to High-Quality Preschool Programs
• Collaboration with Community Providers
• Inclusive Early Childhood Education
• Cultural Responsiveness and Community Accessibility
• Compliance with Federal and State Special Education Regulations
• Responsible Fiscal Stewardship

Projected Long-Term Impact of Mixed Delivery Preschool Expansion

Strategic Objective
Leverage early childhood education and early intervention services to reduce long-term special education costs, improve student outcomes, and decrease reliance on out-of-district placements.

Rationale
Out-of-district placements represent one of the largest mandated expenditures in the District's annual budget. Many students placed in out-of-district programs require highly specialized services due to developmental delays or disabilities that were not fully addressed during the earliest stages of childhood.

Research and national best practices demonstrate that early identification, early intervention, and inclusive preschool programs significantly reduce the likelihood that students will require intensive services later in their educational careers.

By expanding access to preschool through a mixed-delivery model, the Lakewood School District will be able to identify developmental needs earlier and provide targeted services before learning gaps widen.

In addition, providing preschool services through community-based providers that reflect the cultural values and expectations of families will increase participation and access to early intervention services. When families feel comfortable with program settings, they are more likely to engage in early childhood programs, allowing developmental supports to begin sooner.

Impact on Out-of-District Placements

Expanding culturally responsive preschool programs and strengthening early childhood special education services will help:

- Identify developmental delays earlier
- Provide early special education services in inclusive settings
- Reduce the need for more restrictive educational placements
- Increase the number of students who can be served successfully in district programs

Over time, the District anticipates that a strong early childhood system will reduce the number of students requiring out-of-district placements in elementary and middle school, where costs per student can be extremely high.

Fiscal Impact

Out-of-district tuition currently represents one of the largest mandated expenditures in the District's budget.

Strategically investing in early childhood programs may reduce the need for future placements by addressing developmental needs before they become more complex and costly to remediate.

Implementation Strategy

To achieve these outcomes, the District will:

- Expand preschool disabled and inclusive preschool classrooms
- Partner with community-based preschool providers through a mixed delivery model
- Provide early screening and developmental monitoring
- Utilize IDEA funding to support special education services
- Provide professional development for early childhood educators
- Maintain strong program oversight by Lakewood School District staff
- Ensure programs remain culturally responsive and accessible to families

Long-Term Vision

By strengthening early childhood education and early intervention systems, the District will:

- Improve long-term academic and social outcomes for students
- Expand inclusive educational opportunities
- Reduce reliance on restrictive out-of-district placements

• Strengthen partnerships with community providers
• Improve fiscal sustainability while maintaining compliance with federal and state mandates

This approach reflects the District's commitment to providing high-quality, culturally responsive educational opportunities while responsibly managing taxpayer resources.

Action Plan:

Year	Objective	Actions	Person Responsible	Start Date	Completion Date	Measure
1	Establish foundation for preschool expansion and mixed delivery model.	Conduct a district-wide analysis of current preschool capacity. Identify the number of preschool aged children residing in Lakewood. Review existing preschool programs including: Preschool Disabled (PSD) Head Start Programs Community childcare providers Licenses private preschool providers. Change the Preschool hours for students in order to have first period or last period prep, which will eliminate the need for prep coverage. Allow Paraprofessionals to cover lunch periods. Begin formal outreach to community-based preschool providers. Establish preliminary mixed delivery	Supervisor of Special Education Services & Supervisor of Early Childhood Education/ Special Education	July 2026	June 2027	Preschool capacity report completed. Number of preschool providers contacted. Increase in Child Find referrals. Strategic preschool expansion plan presented to the Board for a mixed delivery system.

		partnership agreements with qualified standards, which will **greatly reduce** the number of students seeking Out-of-District Preschool placements. Strengthen Child Find Outreach efforts targeting children ages 3-5. Evaluate current use of IDEA Part B preschool funds Plan for additional inclusive preschool classrooms.				
2	Launch expanded preschool services and strengthen early identification.	Increase the number of district operated preschool classrooms. Using the NJDOE's mixed delivery preschool program, which must be approved by the NJDOE. Expand Preschool Disabled (PSD) programs by placing Special Education Preschool students in Mixed Delivery Preschool Programs. Implement additional inclusive preschool classrooms. Formalize contracts with approved community preschool providers,which will greatly reduce the number of students seeking Out-of-District Preschool placements. Provide training to ensure alignment with:	Supervisor of Special Education Services & Supervisor of Early Childhood Education/ Special Education	July 2027 .	June 2028	Increase in the number of preschool classrooms. Increase the number of preschool students served in-district using the NJDOE mixed delivery Preschool program. Submit NJDOE application. Reduction in Out-of-District preschool placements. Professional development attendance records with sign-in sheets, handouts, and agendas.

		NJ Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards Developmentally appropriate instruction Inclusive practices Provide training to preschool educators on: Early Literacy Language Development Inclusive Instructional strategies Expand preschool awareness campaigns for families.				
3	Expand inclusive preschool opportunities and strengthen program quality.	Increase the number of inclusive preschool classrooms. Expand opportunities for students with disabilities to learn alongside nondisabled peers. Increase CST collaboration with preschool programs for educational purposes. Conduct regular evaluations of district and community preschool classrooms, Ensure instructional quality and compliance with state and federal regulations.	Supervisor of Special Education Services & Supervisor of Early Childhood Education and Special Education	July 2028 .	June 2029	Increase in inclusive preschool classrooms. Program monitoring reports completed. Increased percentage of preschool students served in inclusive settings. Compliance monitoring documentation
4	Fully integrate preschool programs into the district's educational	Increase the number of participating community providers. Expand strong transition planning	Supervisor of Special Education Services &	July 2029	June 2030	Preschool outcome data reports. Kindergarten readiness data.

	framework.	preschool and kindergarten. Implement district-wide tracking of preschool outcomes including: Language Development Early Literacy Social-emotional development. Continue training for educators in: Developmentally appropriate instruction Inclusive early childhood education	Supervisor of Early Childhood Education and Special Education			Number of participating community providers. Preschool transition plans documented.
5	Evaluate program success and establish a sustainable early childhood system.	Conduct a full evaluation of preschool expansion initiatives. Assess impact on: Kindergarten readiness Early identification of disabilities Special Education referral rates. Develop long-term funding strategies to maintain preschool services. Identify opportunities for further expansion of inclusive preschool programs. Present findings to the Board of Education. Reduce long-term special education costs through early intervention.	Supervisor of Special Education Services & Supervisor of Early Childhood Education and Special Education	July 2030 .	June 2031	Preschool program evaluation report. Reduction in Out-of-District preschool placements. Improvement in kindergarten readiness scores. Board presentation and adoption of long-term preschool strategy

Written Monthly Special Education Program Review (PK-12)

Due:	Persons Responsible	Provided to:	Include but not limit to:
Written Report due 5 working days prior to each monthly BOE meeting **Starting 9/2026**	Supervisor of Special Education Services & Supervisor of Early Childhood Education/ Special Education	Superintendent of Schools, who will Provide a Monthly Superintendent's Report to the Board	Available preschool seats Community provider capacity New programs/classes needed Number of inclusive classrooms Ratio of general education students to students with disabilities LRE compliance Number of Due Process Cases at Preschool level Highlight Preschool programs, may include highlight videos.

Why Preschool Matters:

The Long-Term Impact of Early Childhood Education in Lakewood



The Early Advantage



- 90% of brain development occurs by age 5
- Improves language and social skills
- Identifies developmental delays early

Lakewood's Growing Need



- **1,200+** Preschool-Age Children in Lakewood
- Rising Special Education Referrals
- Limited Preschool Seats Available

Benefits of High Quality Preschool



Increased Kindengarten Readiness



Inclusive Early Education



Long-Term Cost Savings



Early Intervention Saves $$$



Early Support Prevents Costly Services Later



- Speech, OT, Behavioral Supports

$10,000 Per Student

- Intensive Services + Out-of-District Placements

$70,000+ Per Student

Investing in Our Future

Building a Strong Foundation for Lakewood's Children

Strategic Priority 2

Nonpublic Special Education Programs

Goal

Create and strengthen a continuum of special education services for eligible nonpublic school students based on identified needs, applicable legal requirements, consultation requirements, and available funding. Increase the number of students appropriately served through compliant, effective, and fiscally responsible programs.

Context

Lakewood serves one of the largest nonpublic school student populations in New Jersey, significantly affecting District operations, program administration, and the allocation of available resources.

The District administers federally and State-funded services for eligible nonpublic school students, including:

- IDEA-funded special education and related services;
- Title I, II, III, and IV services; and
- State-funded nonpublic programs, including textbooks, technology, nursing, security, and other authorized services.

The scope and level of services available to nonpublic school students are governed by applicable federal and State requirements, required consultation, student eligibility, annual funding allocations, and allowable program expenditures.

Strategic Actions

Development of a Continuum of Special Education Services

The District will evaluate the needs of eligible nonpublic school students and develop a coordinated continuum of services, which may include, but not limited to:

- Supplemental instruction;
- Specialized academic support;
- Speech-language, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and other allowable related services;
- Behavioral and social-emotional supports;
- Class-based service-delivery models;

- Child-find, evaluation, and eligibility activities; and
- Other services authorized under applicable federal and State requirements.

Programs will be developed based on student needs, available data, consultation with nonpublic school representatives and parents, available funding, provider capacity, and applicable legal requirements.

Increased Student Participation

The District will work to increase the number of eligible nonpublic school students appropriately receiving services by:

- Strengthening child-find and referral procedures;
- Improving communication with nonpublic schools and families;
- Reviewing enrollment, eligibility, and service data;
- Identifying gaps in the existing continuum of services;
- Expanding appropriate service-delivery models when supported by need and available funding;
- Monitoring student participation, attendance, and service completion; and
- Evaluating whether available funds are being used to serve the greatest appropriate number of eligible students.

Enhanced Centralized Grant Management

The District will strengthen its centralized grant-management system to support:

- Compliance with all federal and State requirements;
- Required consultation and documentation;
- Maximum allowable utilization of available funds;
- Accurate student, program, and financial reporting;
- Timely delivery of approved services;
- Coordination among the Grants Office, Business Office, Special Services Department, vendors, and nonpublic schools;
- Monitoring of vendor performance and program outcomes; and
- Increased accountability for the number of students served and the effectiveness of services provided.

Action Plan:

Year	Objective	Actions	Person Responsible	Start Date	Completion Date	Measure
1	Develop a coordinated continuum of special education services for eligible nonpublic school students.	Based on the needs assessment and required consultation, develop a continuum that may include: • Supplemental and specialized academic instruction; • Speech-language, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and other allowable related services; • Behavioral and social-emotional supports; • Class-based service-delivery models; • Child-find, evaluation, and eligibility activities; and • Other legally authorized services supported by identified needs and available funding. Develop written program descriptions identifying: • Students to be served and eligibility requirements; • Program goals and intended outcomes; • Service-delivery models and schedules; • Staff qualifications and responsibilities; • Student-to-staff ratios, when applicable; • Progress-monitoring and reporting procedures; • Parent communication procedures; and • Estimated costs and	Superintendent Business Administrator Supervisor of Special Services Supervisor of Special Education, Instruction Grants Office	July 1, 2026	June 2027	• Identification of service gaps and unmet needs; •Development of a coordinated continuum of nonpublic special education services

		funding sources.				
2	Implement and improve the coordinated continuum of special education services for eligible nonpublic school students, based on available funding.	**Review Year 1 needs-assessment and implementation data to:** • Confirm student needs, eligibility, and service gaps; • Evaluate provider capacity and staff availability; • Determine which service-delivery models should be continued, expanded, modified, or added; and • Confirm available federal and State funding. **Implement and expand appropriate services by:** • Expanding class-based service-delivery models when supported by student needs and funding; • Strengthening child-find, referral, evaluation, and eligibility procedures; • Improving communication with nonpublic schools and families; • Ensuring that services, expenditures, and vendor invoices are properly documented and reconciled.	Grants Office Superintendent Supervisors of Special Education	July 1, 2027 .	June 30, 2028	• Increase over the Year 1 baseline in the number and percentage of eligible students receiving services; • Increase in the types and availability of appropriate services; • Documentation of required consultation; • Increased allowable utilization of available funding;
3	Evaluate, refine, and strengthen the continuum of nonpublic special education services based on student participation,	**Conduct a comprehensive program review that includes:** • The number of students referred, evaluated, determined eligible, and served; • Progress toward	Grants Office Superintendent Supervisors of Special Education	July 1, 2028	June 30, 2029	Completion of an annual needs, program, and fiscal analysis; • Continued increase in the number and percentage of eligible students

	identified needs, program outcomes, and available funding.	established instructional and service goals; • Provider performance and staff qualifications; • Feedback from families, nonpublic schools, and service providers; • Program expenditures and utilization of available funds; and • Compliance with federal and State requirements. **Refine the continuum by:** • Expanding programs supported by documented student needs and positive results; • Modifying or discontinuing ineffective or underutilized service-delivery models; • Strengthening communication, referral, and service-coordination procedures; • Improving progress monitoring and outcome reporting; • Addressing identified vendor or compliance deficiencies; and • Increasing student access within the limits of available funding.				served; • Reduction in service gaps and wait times; • Evidence of progress toward established program goals; • Documented program modifications based on data and stakeholder feedback.
4	Sustain and enhance an effective, compliant, and fiscally responsible continuum of nonpublic special education services.	**Strengthen program quality and sustainability by:** • Updating student needs, enrollment, eligibility, and participation data; • Reviewing the effectiveness and capacity of each service-delivery model; • Sustaining programs supported by student	Grants Office Superintendent Supervisors of Special Education	July 1, 2029 .	June 30, 2030	.Number and percentage of eligible students receiving services; • Number and types of programs sustained, expanded, refined, or added; • Improved timeliness of referrals, evaluations, and service initiation;

		needs and positive outcome data; • Expanding appropriate programs when supported by need, funding, and provider capacity; • Strengthening child-find, referral, evaluation, and service-initiation timelines; • Improving coordination among the Special Services Department, Grants Office, Business Office, nonpublic schools, and providers; • Strengthening vendor monitoring, service verification, and fiscal controls; • Developing strategies to recruit and retain qualified service providers; • Providing professional development based on identified program needs; and • Maintaining meaningful consultation and communication with nonpublic school representatives and families.				• Improved student attendance, participation, and service completion; • Increased allowable utilization of available funds; • Verified alignment among approved services, delivered services, and vendor invoices; • Provider compliance and performance data; and • Completion of an annual program, compliance, and fiscal report.
5	Evaluate the five-year development of the continuum and establish priorities for the next strategic planning cycle.	**Conduct a comprehensive five-year evaluation addressing:** • Changes in the number and percentage of eligible students served; • The number and types of services available; • Student referral, evaluation, eligibility, participation, and completion data; • Student progress toward established instructional and service	Grants Office Superintendent Supervisors of Special Education	July 1, 2030	June 30, 2031	Completion and presentation of a comprehensive five-year evaluation; • Documented increase from the Year 1 baseline in the number and percentage of eligible students served; • Documented expansion of the continuum of services; • Improved student

		goals; • Service gaps, waitlists, and barriers to access; • Provider capacity, performance, and compliance; • Family and nonpublic school feedback; • Utilization of available federal and State funds; • Program costs and fiscal sustainability; and • Compliance with consultation, documentation, reporting, and monitoring requirements. **Develop a long-term sustainability and improvement plan by:** • Continuing programs supported by student needs and positive outcomes; • Refining, expanding, consolidating, or discontinuing programs based on documented evidence; • Identifying emerging student needs and projected enrollment trends; • Establishing long-term provider capacity and staffing strategies; • Strengthening data collection, progress monitoring, and outcome reporting; • Identifying future funding and program priorities; and • Developing measurable recommendations for the District's next five-year strategic plan.				participation, service completion, and program outcomes; • Reduction in identified service gaps and delays; • Effective and allowable utilization of available funds; • Compliance with applicable federal and State requirements; and • Development of measurable priorities and recommendations for the next strategic planning cycle.

Written Monthly Review Presented to the Board

Due:	Persons Responsible	Provided to:	Include but not limit to:
Written Report due 5 working days prior to each monthly BOE meeting **Starting 9/2026**	Supervisor of Grants	Superintendent of Schools, who will Provide a Monthly Superintendent's Report to the Board	● Number of students receiving NP Services from each Grant. ● Number of 407-1's received for services ● Number of students receiving Comp Ed Services ● Number of students with ISP's being serviced in ICRP classes, CLASS, MEKOR & NPSSP ● Programs or classes not functioning at the maximum student count and the justification as to why. Include your recommendation for the class to remain open or closed, as per the RFP specifications.

Strategic Priority 3

Transportation Efficiency, Safety, and Fiscal Accountability

Goal

Improve the safety, efficiency, and cost-effectiveness of public school transportation routes while strengthening oversight of Nonpublic School Transportation processes, including the timely collection, processing, and verification of B6T forms to ensure accurate Aid-in-Lieu payments and compliance with state regulations.

While Nonpublic School Transportation is largely governed by statutory mandates and Aid-in-Lieu reimbursement structures, the Lakewood School District will strengthen operational procedures to ensure that all transportation services are safe, efficient, properly documented, and fiscally responsible.

Strategic Objectives

- Analyze and identify inefficient public school transportation routes
- Reduce transportation costs through route optimization
- Strengthen safety oversight and regulatory compliance
- Ensure timely collection and verification of Nonpublic B6T forms (March)
- Prevent improper transportation payments through improved verification processes
- Improve transportation data management and reporting

Action Plan:

Year	Objective/ Focus	Actions	Person Responsible	Start Date	Completion Date	Measure
1	Establish operational controls and baseline transportation data.	Conducted a comprehensive review of all public school transportation routes. (Savings: $1.2 Million) Identify inefficiencies such as: Underutilized buses Route overlap Excessive ride times Implement the new routing software in order to improve route planning. Clarify district procedures for the timely collection of all nonpublic B6T forms. Clearly provide B6T submission deadlines for nonpublic schools and families. Reinforce standardized procedures to verify student eligibility, addresses and school enrollment before approving transportation or Aid-in-Lieu. Notify all Nonpublic Schools and the LSTA of the March 15 requirement for B6Ts. Improve the current B6T submission process to include a rationale for the late B6T submissions **(Implemented April of 2026)**	Transportation Manager	July 1, 2026	June 30, 2027	Completion of districtwide route analysis; routing software implemented; documented B6T procedures established; 100% verification of student eligibility prior to transportation approval; baseline transportation cost and efficiency report provided to Superintendent and Board. Updated B6T process to include a rationale for late B6T submissions.

2	Improve routing efficiency and strengthen verification processes.	Review all Public School routes to improve bus capacity utilization. Establish and track transportation vendor metrics including: On time arrival Route efficiency Safety Compliance Implement a structured, clear B6T calendar to ensure: Timely review of B6T forms. Accurate Aid-in-Lieu determinations Compliance with NJDOE timelines	Transportation Manager	July 1, 2027	June 30, 2028	Increased average bus capacity utilization; vendor performance tracking implemented; 100% B6T processing within established deadlines for NP students in K-12, improved on-time arrival rates; annual transportation efficiency report presented to the Board.
3	Improve transparency and operational monitoring.	Create internal dashboard tracking: Route performance Bus Capacity utilization Transportation Costs Analyze the electronic submission and tracking of B6T forms. All forms must be date stamped.	Transportation Manager	July 1, 2028	June 30, 2029	Operational dashboard implemented and reviewed monthly; electronic B6T submission system established; improved transparency in transportation costs and performance metrics; quarterly transportation reports to administration and Board.
4	Strengthen safety and transportation oversight.	Conduct annual internal audits of B6T approvals and Aid-in-Lieu payments. Conduct annual safety inspection of all buses serving Public School Routes.	Transportation Manager	July 1, 2029 .	June 30, 2030	Annual transportation audit completed; compliance with NJDOE transportation regulations verified; safety inspections documented;

						reduction in verification errors and compliance findings; safety and compliance report provided to Board
5	Evaluate improvements and maintain fiscal responsibility	Conduct a full review of transportation operations and route efficiency. Evaluate savings achieved through route optimization and improved B6T verification. Update transportation policies and procedures based on operational findings. Provide monthly and annual reports to the Board.	Transportation Manager	July 1, 2030 .	June 30, 2031	Five-year transportation evaluation completed; documented cost savings from route optimization and verification improvements; updated transportation policies adopted; ongoing monthly transportation reports provided to the Board

Written Monthly Review Presented to the Board

Due:	Persons Responsible	Provided to:	Include but not limit to:
Written Report due 5 working days prior to each monthly BOE meeting **Starting 9/2026**	Transportation Manager	Superintendent of Schools, who will provide a Monthly Superintendent's Report to the Members of the Board of Education	Total number of public school bus routes operating Total number of public school students transported Any new routes added or removed Vendor Fines and reason Aid-in-lieu payments Complaints

			Compliance issues Number of B6T forms received during the month Number of B6T forms processed and verified Number of Aid-in-Lieu payments approved Number of B6Ts pending review Number of B6Ts denied due to ineligibility

Strategic Priority 4

Organizational Effectiveness

Five-Year Administrative Reorganization Plan

Goal

Reduce administrative costs through a phased and strategic reorganization of district leadership while maintaining compliance with federal and state mandates, supporting instructional improvement, and strengthening in-district special education programming.

Context

The Lakewood School District is undertaking a comprehensive reorganization of its administrative structure in response to fiscal challenges, school closures, and the need to maximize operational efficiency, taking into consideration the New Jersey Department of Education's recommendations.

Key factors influencing this plan include:

- Districtwide building reconfiguration and consolidation of schools in 2025-2026.
- Expansion of in-district special education programming aligned with Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) requirements.
- Transition of preschool programs from temporary modular units to permanent brick-and-mortar facilities, increasing in-district service capacity.
- Approximately 40+ active due process cases, requiring extensive preparation, legal coordination, and administrative oversight.
- A strategic initiative to reduce out-of-district (OOD) placements, which represent a major cost driver for the district.
- Creation of two positions: Director of Special Education Services & Director of Curriculum & Instruction

This reduction approach ensures fiscal responsibility while protecting the district's ability to implement long-term cost containment strategies.

Administrators will continue to support and strengthen instructional oversight, and ensure that students and staff continue to receive the academic guidance and support necessary to maintain high-quality educational programs.

Action Plan:

Year	Objective	Actions	Person Responsible	Start Date	Completion Date	Measure
1	Immediate Structural Reduction and Realignment	Eliminate 3 Certified Central Office Administrative Positions. Eliminate 4 Assistant Principal positions. Create a Director of Curriculum and Instruction Reassign curriculum supervisors. Expand cross-functional administrative responsibilities to maximize leadership capacity. Reorganize the Special Services Department Expansion of in-district special education programs. Increased oversight related to LRE implementation. Transition	Superintendent	July 1, 2026 .	June 30, 2027	Reduction of 3 central office positions and 4 assistant principal positions completed; curriculum supervisors reassigned; administrative duties reorganization of the Special Education Department structure, continued support for due process preparation, LRE oversight, and in-district program development. The creation of two Director Positions, as per the NJDOE's recommendation.

		planning for students returning from OOD placements.				
2	Program Development and Administrative Efficiency	Continue to Update and Revise School leadership structure as needed. Reorganize Supervisor responsibilities Special Education Program Expansion Continue development of in-district programs, including: Autism programs Multiple Disabilities programs Learning and Language Disabilities programs Secondary special class programs OOD Placement Reduction Begin transitioning students from OOD placements to district programs where	Superintendent	July 1, 2027 .	June 30, 2028	Completion of administrative efficiency review; expansion of identified in-district special education programs; reduction in OOD placements; documented recommendations for non-instructional administrative consolidation.

		appropriate. Identify opportunities for targeted administrative consolidation in non-instructional areas.				
3	Litigation Stabilization and Administrative Realignment	Special Education Administrative Review Conduct a formal review of Special Education staffing levels. Continue expanding in-district placements. Further reduce reliance on costly OOD programs.	Superintendent	July 1, 2028	June 30, 2029	Formal staffing review completed; due process caseload reduced from Year 1 levels; determination made regarding reduction of 1 Special Education Supervisor if appropriate, increased number of students served in-district; reduced OOD costs.
4	Structural Consolidation	Administrative Efficiency Review Conduct a districtwide evaluation of administrative staffing levels compared with: Student enrollment & Program needs Regulatory requirements Ensure that all In-district programs are fully	Superintendent	July 1, 2029	June 30, 2030	Districtwide administrative review completed; decision made on additional Special Education Supervisor reduction; evidence of consolidated supervisory responsibilities; reduced legal and compliance issues; continued decrease in OOD placements.

		operational. OOD placements have been significantly reduced. Due process cases have stabilized. Organizational Streamlining Strengthen internal compliance processes to reduce legal exposure.				
5	Long-Term Administrative Sustainability	Organizational Review Conduct a comprehensive review of: Administrative staffing ratios Program needs Fiscal sustainability Administrative Adjustments Establish a lean administrative framework that supports: Instructional leadership Compliance with state and federal	Superintendent	July 1, 2030	June 30, 2031	Comprehensive organizational review completed; long-term staffing ratios established; additional consolidations identified if appropriate; sustainable administrative structure in place; alignment demonstrated between leadership capacity, compliance, and fiscal responsibility.

		mandates Fiscal responsibility				

Written Monthly Report to the Board:

Due:	Persons Responsible	Provided to:	Include but not limit to:
Written Report due to Board each month **Starting 9/2026**	Superintendent	The Superintendent will provide a monthly report to the Members of the Board of Education	Staffing Vacancies, concerns, highlights Administrative Adjustments

Strategic Priority 5

Improving Student Achievement

Goal

Improve academic outcomes for all students through aligned curriculum, strong instructional practices, and data-driven decision making.

Strategic Actions

Curriculum Alignment

Continue to ensure all curriculum is fully aligned with the **New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLS).**

Applied for the High Impact Tutoring Grant (NJDOE)

Formative Assessment Framework

Continue to Implement district-wide formative assessments every **4–6 weeks** to monitor student progress.

Data-Driven Instruction

Continue to strengthen Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) focused on:

- Student performance data
- Targeted interventions
- Differentiated instruction
- MTSS
- PBSIS
- Behavior management

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)

Continue to expand academic and behavioral intervention support.

Class Size

When preparing for an upcoming school year, schedules and staffing are prepared with 25 students in a class. As the year progresses, many families, like other high needs districts, move

in and out of the district, leaving classrooms with more or less than the original 25 students per class that start in September. This is not unique to Lakewood.

Below is a chart demonstrating such for the **2025-2026** School Year:

Source: IT Weekly Reports

Month	Students Transferred Out	Students Transferred In
September	117	65
October	50	26
November	20	27
December	14	33
January	22	31
February	26	30
March As of 3/27/2026	16	21

As per N.J.A.C. 6A:13-3.1:

Class sizes in high poverty, at-risk districts should be:

- **Grades K–3:**
  - ➢ Maximum **21 students**
- **Grades 4–5:**
  - ➢ Maximum **23 students**
  - ➢ May increase to **25,** if K–3 are kept below 21
- **Grades 6–12:**
  - ➢ Maximum **24 students**
- **Exceptions:**
  - ➢ Allowed for certain classes (e.g., **physical education, performing arts**)

Based on current student enrollment projections the same number of classroom teachers will be needed for the 2026-2027 school year.

All staffing will be reviewed in order to maintain the appropriate staffing levels.

BOOKMARKS:
Curriculum, Programs, and Systems
Assessments
Professional Development

CURRICULUM, PROGRAMS, AND SYSTEMS

01.	The District's ELA and Math curriculum and instructional approach are grounded in **evidence-based, research-aligned practices**, ensuring consistent, high-quality literacy instruction across classrooms.
02.	The **Walk to Read** ELA foundational skills model was fully implemented for the first time during the 2025-2026 school year (a highly successful pilot for first graders was conducted during the Spring 2025). This model provides differentiated instruction and intervention for K–2 students based on skill level. The framework allows for acceleration by allocating time for more than one UFLI lesson to be taught in a single session when student data indicates readiness, helping students reach grade-level benchmarks more efficiently.
03.	Full implementation of **UFLI** as a foundational skills curriculum (K–2) during the 2025-2026 school year, including daily progress monitoring that directly informs instructional decision-making and flexible student grouping (after successful pilot of this resource during Winter/Spring 2025).
04.	Participation in a research study with the University of Maryland on the use of **Reading Mastery** as a Tier 2 Intervention for the 2025-2026 school year. This pilot will continue for the 2026-2027 school year. Three full days of training were provided for the 2025-2026 school year in addition to weekly support and virtual and in person observations, feedback, and guidance provided by a NIFDI Coach. YouTube video link
05.	Implementation of **Reading Mastery** as an additional foundational skills intervention for students who have not demonstrated sufficient progress with UFLI, ensuring targeted Tier 2 and Tier 3 support for students that require a mastery program.
06.	Integration of **The Writing Revolution (TWR)** approach, aligned with reading content, to strengthen students' written expression and deepen comprehension (K–5).

07.	Continued implementation of a **robust, knowledge-building curriculum** using CKLA (Core Knowledge Language Arts) across grades K–5 to support vocabulary development and reading comprehension.
08.	Deployment of **K–2 Reading Interventionists** to provide targeted foundational skills instruction through the Walk to Read blocks and intensive Tier 3 interventions for students with the greatest needs.
09.	**K-5 Reading & Math Interventionists** provide intensive Tier 3 targeted instruction and support.
10.	For the 2026-27 school year, implementation of **WIN period** (What I Need) in grades 3-5; intervention for ELA and math, and STEM and cross-curricular enrichment
11.	Revise the 2026–27 building-wide schedule to **stagger ELA and Math instruction** throughout the day, maximizing staff availability to support the greatest number of small groups for students needing additional support, as appropriate (K–5).
12.	Develop a building-wide schedule for the 2026-27 school year that allows for **flexible grouping** of students for both math and ELA to ensure instruction is responsive to students' current learning needs and ongoing progress (3-5).
13.	Expand the use of the **Intervention section of Educlimber** in the 2026-27 school year to support MTSS
14.	**After-school tutoring** for students in grade 9-12 for ELA, Math, Science, and Social Studies to provide targeted, flexible, and equitable academic support that reinforces core skills, addresses individual learning needs, and promotes academic achievement.
15.	Continued use of supplemental **computerized Intervention programs** for math and ELA: Lexia, iReady, and Istation, to support a wide variety of students.
16.	Continued use of Edmentum as a **credit recovery** option for high school students.
17.	Continued use of the **Imagine Learning: Sonday System** reading foundational skills curriculum resource option for special education students.
18.	**Spanish language foundational skills** programs: **Estrellita/Lunita/Fugaces phonics** programs; Heggerty Phonological Awareness program; Palabras a su paso (K-5) and HD Word (grades 6-8)
19.	Full implementation of **CommonLit** (ELA resources) across grades 6–12 to support data-driven curriculum decisions and assessment development

20.	Change in scheduling for the 2026-2027 school year to include thirty minutes of **daily Social Studies** instruction (grades 1-5), while maintaining the forty-minute dedicated block for this subject in grades 6-12.
21.	Change in scheduling for the 2026-2027 school year to include thirty minutes of **daily Science** instruction (grades 1-5), while maintaining the forty-minute dedicated block for this subject in grades 6-12.

ASSESSMENTS

01.	Authentic and consistent use of **Universal Screening Data** (Amplify DIBELS 8th Edition and mClass Lectura for Dual Language Reporting) three times a year to monitor student progress and evaluate curriculum and program effectiveness across K–2.
02.	Continued implementation of **biweekly progress monitoring** for K-2 ELA students through Amplify for students performing below and well below grade-level expectations, ensuring timely instructional adjustments.
03.	Full implementation of **EduClimber** (data warehouse) and **DNA** (assessment platform) across K–12 to support data-driven decision-making and system-wide coherence.
04.	**Daily math spirals and weekly spiral quiz** designed to reinforce and support long-term retention of previously taught mathematical concepts and skills.
05.	A **DOL/Check for Understanding** tracking tool is used to formatively assess student progress in math, identify skills students can independently demonstrate, and inform ongoing math curricular revisions.
06.	In March 2026, the district was presented with an **award from Amplify for *Purpose in Practice*** in using assessment to influence instruction at their Fourth Annual New Jersey Literacy Summit.
07.	Continued use of **district-wide, common assessments**: Benchmark assessments, Unit assessments, spirals, and skills assessments throughout English Language Arts and Math grades K-12.
08.	**WIDA** mid-year MODEL (Measure of Developing English Language) for long-term MLs in grades 6-12; to assess and monitor students' English language progress in listening, speaking, reading, and writing; to inform instruction; and predict student outcomes on annual ACCESS tests.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

01.	Ongoing, **collaborative data meetings** involving teachers, coaches, supervisors, and/or building administrators to analyze student progress, address challenges, and continuously refine instructional systems and practices.
02.	Ongoing **Sheltered English** training for teachers who work with current and former ML students; to equip teachers with strategies to make content comprehensible and foster English language development
03.	Ongoing **Professional Learning Community** meetings / trainings with instructional coaches, building principal, and/or curriculum supervisor for grades K-12 in which stakeholders discuss curriculum, assessments, grade-level data, systems, etc.
04.	In depth **training for paraprofessionals and teachers on the Walk to Read model and UFLI curricular resource**. Multiple training sessions were conducted with in class coaching that included practice and feedback.

2025-2026 Textbook Inventory (K-12)

Copy of 2025-2026 TEXTBOOK INVENTORY, KINDERGARTEN - GRADE 12

5-Year Curriculum Plan & Textbooks

5-Year Curriculum Plan & Textbooks, 2025-2029

2026-2027 LHS Program of Studies

LHS Program of Studies 26-27 (4).pdf

Lakewood School District

Academic Strategic Goals, 5-Year Plan

Year	Objective	Actions	Person(s) Responsible	Start Date	Completion Date	Measure
Year 1						
1	Curriculum oversight	Restructure curriculum supervisors Appoint a Director of Curriculum & Instruction Appoint a Supervisor / Director of Special Education Services / MTSS Reduce the number of direct reports to the Superintendent	Superintendent	4/2026	Ongoing	Reorganizational chart
	Change of Kindergarten entry age	Change the cutoff date for kindergarten entry from December 31 to October 1st	Superintendent Board of Education	7/2026	Ongoing	Board agenda Letter to parents Letter & email to staff
	Curricular resources, revisions, and differentiation	Curriculum Supervisors will meet with building-level administrators and curriculum teams in order to discuss, review, and make recommendations for revisions for ELA and Math curricula The Director of Curriculum & Instruction will meet with each Curriculum Supervisor to ensure a balance of changes between content areas and alignment with research and best practices Curricular revisions will be published annually, during the summer months only, to ensure	Director of Curriculum & Instruction Supervisor of Humanities Supervisor of STEM Supervisor of Early Elementary Education Supervisor of Early Childhood Education (PK) & Special Education Program (PK), & Oversight of NJDOE Mixed Delivery Preschool Supervisor of Special Education Programs, K-5	9/2026	Ongoing	Meeting agendas Board approvals of curriculum revisions Curricula documents and pacing guides

		that no mid-year revisions or changes are made The messaging of district-created lessons will shift from a soft script to a lesson-planning tool, with the goal of strengthening teachers' planning and delivery of lessons. The new pacing guide format will reflect instructional sequences of skills and date ranges to encourage more flexibility and differentiation to meet students' needs. Pacing will be determined based on progress monitoring and student mastery data. Daily pacing guides will no longer be included in curricular documents. District-wide messaging will be communicated in a variety of modalities - (PLCs, school newsletters, building administrators, instructional coaches, teacher leaders, and curriculum supervisors)	Supervisor of Special Education Programs, 6-12			
	MTSS	MTSS 5-Year Plan to strengthen and increase comprehensive services that are available for all students and stakeholders.	Director of Special Education Services / MTSS Building Administrators Assistant Principals Supervisor of Special Education Programs, K-5 Supervisor of Special Education Programs, 6-12 Director of	9/2026	Ongoing	Increase in student achievement on Universal Screener and state assessments Decrease in the number of discipline referrals Meeting agendas Training and Professional Development

			Curriculum & Instruction Supervisor of Humanities Supervisor of STEM Supervisor of Early Elementary Education Supervisor of Early Childhood Education (PK) & Special Education Program (PK), & Oversight of NJDOE Mixed Delivery Preschool Guidance Counselors Behaviorists, Therapists Outside Consultants Paraprofessionals, Teachers, Interventions, Instructional Coaches Students and Parents			agendas, handouts, presentations Intervention plans in *Educlimber* Instructional modifications
	Student engagement and instructional practices	With stakeholder input, continue to analyze the value added and purpose of each assessment and eliminate/reduce those that are no longer needed Increase the guided practice portion of the lesson structure with a focus on cognitive engagement, discussion, and active participation from ALL students.	Building Administrators Director of Curriculum & Instruction Supervisor of Humanities Supervisor of STEM Supervisor of Early Elementary Education	9/2026	Ongoing	Walkthroughs and observations Revised Instructional Frameworks

	LECC trailers	Pre-school classes have been moved to Spruce Street School	Superintendent Board of Education	9/2025	9/2025	LECC students and staff have successfully transitioned to Spruce Street School
	Advanced Placement courses	Offer a voluntary 10-week AP prep course after the school day to help students prepare for their AP exams.	Building Principals Director of Curriculum & Instruction Supervisor of Humanities Supervisor of STEM AP Coordinator	7/2026	Ongoing	Increase the number of students passing the AP exams
	Career Readiness	LHS CTE Plan includes strategies to strengthen CTE Pathways and increase the number of participating students CTE Pathway orientation session for students	Building Principals Perkins Coordinator Director of Curriculum & Instruction Supervisor of Humanities Supervisor of STEM Grant Supervisor	5/2026	Ongoing	Increase in class sizes and pathway participation Walkthroughs, Observations
	Dual Enrollment	Research available grants to increase funding for Dual Enrollment opportunities	Building Principals Director of Curriculum & Instruction Supervisor of Humanities Supervisor of STEM Grant Supervisor	9/2026	Ongoing	Grant applications, funding, an increase in the number of students enrolled in the Dual Enrollment program
	Dropout and Graduation Rates	LHS Graduation & Dropout Plan includes strategies to decrease the dropout rates and increase	Building Principals Guidance Counselors	9/2025	Ongoing	Improved student attendance, reduction in dropout rates, and increase in

		the graduation rates; including attendance monitoring, early intervention, providing student supports, family engagement, and improving school climate.	Attendance Officer			graduation rates
	Teacher Oversight	Reduce the number of daily walkthroughs from 3-5 per day/per administrator to 2-3 per day/per administrator Reduce the required observation length from 40 minutes to 20 minutes minimum for both tenured and non-tenured teachers	Building Principals Director of Curriculum & Instruction Supervisor of Humanities Supervisor of STEM Supervisor of Early Elementary Education	7/2026	Ongoing	Walkthrough and observation schedules
	Professional Development	PD to address the culture of low expectations. Team building PD for district office staff and building administration to build collaboration and increase a sense of community. The District will reduce the number of K-5 teacher prep periods devoted to PLC/PD while maintaining the total number of monthly PLC/PDs. Focus on instructional practices that promote cognitive student engagement Use of student data to drive pacing and inform instruction	Building Principals Director of Curriculum & Instruction Supervisor of Humanities Supervisor of STEM Supervisor of Early Elementary Education Supervisor of Early Childhood Education (PK) & Special Education Program (PK), & Oversight of NJDOE Mixed Delivery Preschool	7/2026	Ongoing	PD Agendas, Sign-in sheets, PLC schedules

Year	Objective	Actions	Person(s) Responsible	Start Date	Completion Date	Measure
Year 2						
2	Curriculum	Curriculum Supervisors will continue to meet with building-level administrators and curriculum teams in order to discuss, review, and make recommendations for revisions for ELA and Math curricula The Director of Curriculum & Instruction will meet regularly with each Curriculum Supervisor to ensure a balance of changes between content areas and alignment with research and best practices Curricular revisions will be published annually, during the summer months only, to ensure that no mid-year revisions or changes are made District-wide messaging will be communicated in a variety of modalities - (PLCs, school newsletters, building administrators, instructional coaches, teacher leaders, and curriculum supervisors)	Director of Curriculum & Instruction Supervisor of Humanities Supervisor of STEM Supervisor of Early Elementary Education Supervisor of Early Childhood Education (PK) & Special Education Program (PK), & Oversight of NJDOE Mixed Delivery Preschool	9/2026	Ongoing	Meeting agendas Board approvals of curriculum revisions Curricula documents and pacing guides
	MTSS	Continue implementing the MTSS 5-Year Plan to further strengthen comprehensive services available to all students and stakeholders.	Director of Curriculum & Instruction / MTSS Building Administrators Assistant Principals Supervisor of Special Education Programs,	9/2025	Ongoing	Increase in student achievement on Universal Screener, state assessments Decrease in the number of discipline referrals Meeting agendas

			K-5 Supervisor of Special Education Programs, 6-12 Director of Curriculum & Instruction Supervisor of Humanities Supervisor of STEM Supervisor of Early Elementary Education Supervisor of Early Childhood Education (PK) & Special Education Program (PK), & Oversight of NJDOE Mixed Delivery Preschool Guidance Counselors Behaviorists, Therapists Outside Consultants Paraprofessionals, Teachers, Interventions, Instructional Coaches Students and Parents			Training and Professional Development agendas, handouts, presentations Intervention plans in *Educlimber* Instructional modifications
	Student engagement and instructional practices	With stakeholder input, continue to analyze the value added and purpose of each assessment and eliminate/reduce those that are no longer needed Increase the guided practice portion of the lesson structure with a focus on cognitive engagement, discussion,	Building Administrators Director of Curriculum & Instruction Supervisor of Humanities Supervisor of STEM	9/2026	Ongoing	Walkthroughs and observations Instructional Frameworks

		and active participation from ALL students.	Supervisor of Early Elementary Education			
	Advanced Placement courses	Continue to offer a voluntary 10-week AP prep course after the school day to help students prepare for their AP exams.	Building Principals Director of Curriculum & Instruction Supervisor of Humanities Supervisor of STEM AP Coordinator	7/2026	Ongoing	Passing AP Test scores
	Career Readiness	LHS CTE Plan includes strategies to strengthen CTE Pathways and increase the number of participating students CTE Pathway orientation session for students	Building Principals Perkins Coordinator Director of Curriculum & Instruction Supervisor of Humanities Supervisor of STEM Grant Supervisor	5/2026	Ongoing	Class size, Pathway participation, Walkthroughs, Observations
	Dual Enrollment	Continue researching available grants to increase funding for Dual Enrollment opportunities	Building Principals Director of Curriculum & Instruction Supervisor of Humanities Supervisor of STEM Grant Supervisor	9/2026	Ongoing	Grant applications, funding, students enrolled in Dual Enrollment program
	Dropout and Graduation Rates	LHS Graduation & Dropout Plan includes strategies to decrease the dropout rates and increase the graduation rates; including attendance	Building Principals Guidance Counselors Attendance Officer	9/2025	Ongoing	Improved student attendance, reduction in dropout rates, and increase in graduation rates

		monitoring, early intervention, providing student supports, family engagement, and improving school climate.				
	Professional Development	Modify the district calendar to incorporate a full-day Professional Development institute in February Continue PD to address the culture of low expectations. Continue team-building PD for district office staff and building administrators to foster collaboration and increase a sense of community. Continue to focus on instructional practices that promote cognitive student engagement Continue to use student data to drive pacing and inform instruction	Building Principals Director of Curriculum & Instruction Supervisor of Humanities Supervisor of STEM Supervisor of Early Elementary Education	7/2026	Ongoing	PD Agendas, Sign-in sheets, PLC schedules

Year 3

Overarching goals for Year 3:

- Curriculum audit - All core subjects for all grade levels (Oct-Jan)
    - Audit reports will be reviewed by a district committee (Feb-Mar)
    - Follow-up action plan will be developed (Apr-May)
    - Curriculum revisions during Summer 2028 for the 28-29 school year
- MTSS
    - First year of implementation of Social / Emotional Universal Screener
    - MTSS team will meet to discuss how to support students based on Social / Emotional Screener results
    - Continue to provide more advanced training on implementing the *Pyramid* model
        - Evidence of strategies being implemented in classrooms, as documented in walkthroughs and classroom visits
    - Continue to provide more advanced training on implementing the *Conscious Discipline* model
- Student Engagement
    - Continue to provide feedback to teachers regarding cognitive student engagement and oral participation as documented in walkthroughs and observations
    - Noted improvement in classroom discourse and cognitive engagement is expected
- End of Year Reflection

○ Stakeholders will meet to reflect on goals met and next steps for years 4 & 5.
Year 4 & 5
● An extra PD day at the start of the school year will be dedicated to training all stakeholders on curriculum revisions implemented during Summer 2028. ● The Plan for Years 4 & 5, which was created at the end of Year 3, will be shared and implemented.

Strategic Priority 6

Goal

Reduce legal expenditures through proactive compliance measures, early dispute resolution, and strategic management of legal services while ensuring full compliance with federal and state laws and protecting the educational rights of students.

Strategic Actions

Early Case Resolution

Expand the use of mediation, resolution sessions, and other early dispute resolution processes to address conflicts promptly and reduce the need for prolonged litigation. Early intervention will allow the District to resolve disputes efficiently while maintaining positive relationships with families and stakeholders.

Internal Compliance Reviews

Implement regular internal compliance reviews to identify and address potential legal issues before they escalate into formal disputes or litigation. Reviews shall focus on areas including, but not limited to:

- Special Education Compliance – Ensuring adherence to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), N.J.A.C. 6A:14, and related federal and state requirements.
- Personnel Matters – Reviewing employment practices, evaluations, and disciplinary procedures to ensure compliance with applicable laws and collective bargaining agreements.
- Contract Management – Monitoring vendor agreements, procurement processes, and contractual obligations to reduce the risk of disputes and financial liability.

Legal Cost Monitoring and Reporting

Establish a structured legal oversight process to ensure transparency and fiscal accountability.

- In-House Counsel shall provide monthly updates to the Superintendent and Board of Education regarding the status of legal matters and the monthly cost, including due process cases, settlements, personnel matters, contract disputes, and pending litigation.
- The District shall maintain a monthly litigation cost tracking system to monitor legal expenditures and identify opportunities for cost reduction.
- Periodic reports will be used to inform strategic decisions regarding legal services and case management.

Special Education Litigation Prevention Framework

Implement proactive measures designed to reduce special education disputes and due process filings.

- Strengthen IEP development and review processes to ensure compliance and educational appropriateness.
- Conduct pre-due process internal case reviews prior to litigation to determine opportunities for resolution.
- Provide professional development for administrators, Child Study Team members, and related service providers on compliance, documentation, and best practices.
- Promote collaborative communication with families to address concerns early and prevent escalation.

Strategic Legal Management

Adopt a coordinated legal services model that maximizes efficiency and reduces reliance on outside counsel.

- Utilize In-House Counsel to manage legal strategy, coordinate legal matters, and represent the District in mediations and resolution meetings.
- Utilize Outside Counsel for due process hearings, complex litigation, or specialized legal matters when necessary.

Student Settlement Agreements

Student settlement agreements shall be considered only in exceptional or extenuating circumstances and must comply with all applicable federal and state laws. Where required, settlements resolving matters pending before the Office of Administrative Law (OAL) must be reviewed and approved by an Administrative Law Judge (ALJ).

Action Plan:

Year	Objective	Actions	Person Responsible	Start Date	Completion Date	Measure
Year 1	Implement a structured legal oversight framework to monitor expenditures and improve coordination of legal services.	Implement a district-wide legal cost tracking system to monitor monthly legal expenditures and identify trends. Establish a monthly litigation review process led by in-house counsel with updates to the Superintendent and Board of Education Develop standard operating procedures for legal referrals, ensuring matters are evaluated internally before engaging outside counsel. Conduct a baseline review of all active litigation, due process cases, settlements and contractual disputes. Establish protocols for early case review and resolution sessions prior to escalation to litigation,	In-House Counsel	July 1, 2026	June 30, 2027	Monthly legal expenditure tracking reports implemented; litigation review meetings conducted monthly; baseline legal case inventory completed; SOPs for legal referrals adopted; reduction in unnecessary outside counsel referrals.
Year 2	Reduce the number of disputes escalating to litigation through early intervention and improved compliance practices.	Expand the use of mediation, resolution sessions, and early dispute resolution processes. Implement pre-litigation case review procedures for special education disputes and personnel matters. Conduct internal compliance reviews focusing on: Special Education Compliance Personnel practices and procurement compliance Contract management and procurement compliance. Provide Professional development for administrators, child study team members and	In-House Counsel	July 1, 2027	June 30, 2028	Increase in mediation and early resolution sessions; reduction in cases progressing to due process hearings; compliance review reports completed; professional development sessions conducted for administrators and CST members.

		supervisors regarding legal compliance and documentation standards				
Year 3	Optimize the use of in-house and outside counsel to maximize efficiency and reduce costs.	Implement a coordinated legal services model: In-house counsel manages legal strategy, mediations, and resolution sessions. Outside counsel utilized only for complex litigation, due process hearings, or specialized matters. Establish legal service guidelines for when outside counsel may be retained. Conduct annual reviews of leal vendor contracts and fee structures. Implement quarterly legal expenditures reports to monitor cost trends.	In-House Counsel	July 1, 2028	June 30, 2029	Adoption of legal service utilization guidelines; quarterly legal expenditure reports presented to administration/board; reduced outside counsel expenditures; annual review of legal vendor contracts completed.
Year 4	Implement proactive systems designed to prevent disputes and reduce legal exposure.	Implement a Special Education Litigation Prevention Framework, including: Strengthened IEP review procedures Internal pre-due process case evaluations Collaborative problems-solving meetings with families. Establish risk management protocols for personnel and contract disputes Implement annual legal compliance audits in high-risk areas.	In-House Counsel	July 1, 2029	June 30, 2030	Litigation prevention framework implemented; reduction in due process filings; annual legal compliance audit completed; documented early intervention meetings with families prior to litigation.

Year 5	Institutionalize long-term legal cost management and compliance monitoring systems.	Conduct a comprehensive five-year legal expenditure review to evaluate cost trends and effectiveness of implemented strategies. Update district policies and procedures related to: Legal services procurement Settlement Agreements Compliance Monitoring Establish permanent annual legal oversight reporting structures. Develop a long-term litigation prevention strategy aligned with district operational goals.	In-House Counsel	July 1, 2030	June 30, 2031	Five-year legal expenditure report completed; updated policies adopted by the Board; annual legal oversight reporting structure implemented; long-term litigation prevention strategy established.

Accountability and Monitoring

The District's In-House Counsel shall provide the Superintendent and Board of Education with a **monthly written update** detailing the status of all legal matters involving the District, including due process petitions, settlement negotiations, personnel matters, contract disputes, and any pending or potential litigation, and monthly outside litigation costs, to ensure appropriate oversight and informed decision-making.

Written Monthly Review:

Due:	Persons Responsible	Provided to:	Include but not limit to:
Written Report due 5 working days prior to each monthly BOE meeting **Starting 9/2026**	In-house Legal Counsel	Superintendent of Schools, who will Provide a Superintendent's Report to the Board	Status of all legal matters involving the District, including due process petitions, settlement negotiations, personnel matters, contract disputes, and any pending or potential litigation, and monthly outside litigation costs, to ensure appropriate oversight and informed decision-making.

Fiscal Context / Cost Containment

Personnel Cost Management Strategy

Paraprofessional Staffing Review and Program Alignment

In preparation for the 2026–2027 school year, the District will implement a comprehensive review of paraprofessional staffing assignments to ensure that staffing levels align with student needs as documented in Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), program structures, and contractual obligations.

Proposed Action for the 2026–2027 School Year

In preparation for the 2026–2027 school year, the District will implement a comprehensive review of paraprofessional staffing assignments to ensure that staffing levels align with student needs as documented in Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), program structures, and contractual obligations.

Paraprofessionals play a critical role in supporting instructional programs and providing direct assistance to students with disabilities, particularly those enrolled in autism programs, behavioral support programs, and high-needs self-contained classrooms. Given the District's large population of students requiring intensive services, paraprofessionals are an essential component of the District's special education service delivery model.

The District remains committed to maintaining the level of staffing necessary to support students with disabilities while simultaneously implementing responsible fiscal strategies that ensure long-term sustainability.

Proposed Action for the 2026–2027 School Year

To allow the District to conduct a full programmatic and fiscal review, the following personnel action will be implemented:

Reduction in Force (RIF) Notices

The issuance of notices will allow the District sufficient time to conduct a comprehensive review of:

- Individual student IEP requirements
- Classroom program needs
- Appropriate paraprofessional assignments
- Staffing levels aligned with program models and **Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)** requirements.

This process will ensure that paraprofessional staffing decisions are based on documented student needs and programmatic requirements, rather than historical staffing patterns.

Collective Bargaining Considerations

The current paraprofessional collective bargaining agreement expires **June 30, 2026**.

As part of ongoing contract negotiations with the Lakewood Education Association, the District will explore staffing structures designed to maintain services while reducing long-term benefit costs.

Proposals under consideration include, but are not limited to:

• Paraprofessional work schedules of 29.5 hours per week
• Positions structured without health benefit eligibility
• Flexible staffing models aligned with program and student needs
• Outsourcing of paraprofessional services where appropriate.

Any negotiated staffing decisions will continue to comply with:

• Individual student IEP requirements
• N.J.A.C. 6A:14 special education regulations
• Collective bargaining obligations
• Applicable state and federal employment laws.

Oversight and Implementation

District administration will review paraprofessional staffing annually and provide updates to the Board of Education regarding:

• Staffing levels
• Program assignments
• Fiscal impact and cost savings.

This approach ensures that staffing decisions remain data-driven, legally compliant, and fiscally responsible.

Estimated Fiscal Impact

Paraprofessional Staffing Model Review

Paraprofessionals represent a significant portion of the District's personnel costs, particularly when positions include full health benefits and associated employment costs.

As part of the District's fiscal stabilization strategy, the proposed staffing review and revised work schedule structure will allow the District to align paraprofessional staffing with documented student needs while reducing long-term benefit expenditures.

This strategy focuses on responsible staffing alignment rather than reductions in required student services.

The District currently employs **162 paraprofessionals** across its schools to support instructional programs and services for students with disabilities.

Paraprofessional Benefits Paid by the District:
$6,589,876.16

This initiative represents approximately $6.3 million in annual cost containment, making it one of the most significant cost-reduction strategies available to the District within areas of local operational control.

Implementation Timeline:

Date	Action
April 21, 2026	ZOOM Meeting with the Superintendent and Business Administrator to notify all Paraprofessionals of RIF notices
April 24, 2026	RIF notices issued to all paraprofessionals
May-June 2026	IEP and Program staffing review
June 30, 2026	Collective Bargaining Agreement Expires
Summer 2026	Reassignment aligned with program staffing
September 2026	Implementation of revised staffing needs.

Additional Cost Containment Initiative

Staffing Reductions

Goal

Align administrative and clerical staffing levels with operational needs while reducing personnel expenditures and maintaining effective oversight of district programs and services.

Context

As part of the District's broader fiscal stabilization strategy, the administrative structure and support staffing levels were reviewed to identify opportunities for operational efficiencies.

Through organizational restructuring and consolidation of responsibilities, the District has identified positions that can be eliminated without compromising program compliance, instructional oversight, or operational effectiveness.

Strategic Action

For the upcoming school year, the District eliminated:

39 Positions - $6,289,817.28

Paraprofessional Benefits - $6,589,876.16

Total - $12,879,693.44

Preschool students will attend school from 8:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Teachers will have last period prep from 2:15 to 3:00 p.m. Paraprofessionals will cover lunch periods.

Athletics Budget will be reduced by $200,000.00

Extracurricular Budget will be reduced by $50,000.00

In addition:
*ICR/ICS programs will be reviewed for efficiency.

*CST 11-month positions to CST 10-month positions - Must be negotiated.

These changes will be implemented through restructuring, reassignment of duties, reduction-in-force (RIF), and consolidation of supervisory and operational responsibilities.

The District will ensure that all operational and compliance requirements continue to be met through existing administrative structures.

Additional Cost Containment Initiative

Athletics

Additional Cost Containment Initiative

Goal

Conduct a comprehensive review of the District's athletics program expenditures to identify efficiencies and reduce operational costs while maintaining meaningful extracurricular opportunities for students.

Context

Athletic programs provide important opportunities for student engagement, leadership development, teamwork, and school pride. These programs also contribute to improved attendance, student motivation, and overall school climate.

Research consistently demonstrates that students who participate in extracurricular activities—including athletics—are more likely to attend school regularly, maintain stronger academic engagement, and develop positive relationships with peers and staff. Participation in athletics is also associated with reductions in chronic absenteeism, improved student discipline outcomes, and stronger connections to the school community.

At the same time, the District must ensure that all non-instructional expenditures are aligned with its broader fiscal stabilization strategy.

Given the District's current financial challenges, it is necessary to review all discretionary spending areas, including athletics, to identify opportunities for cost containment.

Some districts address athletics funding by removing athletic programs from the base operating budget and placing them before voters as a **separate "second question" on the annual school election ballot**. While this option may appear to provide a mechanism for reducing the base budget, it presents significant risks and potential unintended consequences.

If athletics were removed from the general operating budget and presented as a separate ballot question, the District would be required to eliminate the athletics program from the budget entirely. Should voters reject the second question, the program cannot simply be restored within the same budget cycle. In many cases, such programs cannot be reintroduced for several budget cycles, which could result in the complete suspension of athletics for multiple years.

Such an outcome would have serious implications for students and the broader school community.

The elimination of athletics programs could:

• Reduce student engagement and school connectedness
• Increase chronic absenteeism among students who rely on extracurricular activities as a motivation to attend school
• Negatively impact school climate and student morale
• Reduce opportunities for leadership development, teamwork, and physical wellness
• Create inequitable access to extracurricular opportunities for students who may not otherwise have access to community-based programs.

In addition, athletics programs are widely recognized as an important component of a Thorough and Efficient (T&E) educational experience, which the NJDOE has recognized since 2014 in Lakewood. Athletics supports the holistic development of students and contributes to a positive and supportive learning environment.

For these reasons, the District believes that eliminating athletics from the base budget and placing the program at risk through a second-question vote would create significant educational and operational challenges that could ultimately undermine student outcomes.

Strategic Actions

The District will conduct a comprehensive review of the athletics budget, including:

• Coaching stipends and staffing assignments
• Transportation costs associated with athletic events
• Equipment purchases and replacement schedules
• Game scheduling and facility usage
• Officials, league, and tournament fees
• Uniform and equipment procurement practices

Where appropriate, the District will implement efficiencies through:

• Improved coordination of transportation for athletic events
• Competitive purchasing practices for equipment and uniforms
• Review and alignment of coaching assignments and stipends
• Strategic scheduling and shared facility use.

Estimated Fiscal Impact

Through these operational efficiencies, the District anticipates achieving approximately:

$200,000 in annual athletics program cost reductions.

Consideration of Pay-to-Play Programs

Some districts implement athletic participation fees, commonly referred to as "pay-to-play" programs, as a means of offsetting athletics costs. However, due to the socioeconomic status of many families within the Lakewood School District, implementing a pay-to-play structure would likely create financial barriers for students and significantly reduce participation in extracurricular athletics.

Such a model could disproportionately impact students from economically disadvantaged households and limit equitable access to opportunities that support student development, school engagement, and community connection.

Accordingly, the District has determined that a pay-to-play model would not be an appropriate or equitable solution for Lakewood students and could ultimately decrease participation and opportunities for students who benefit most from extracurricular engagement.

Strategic Significance

This initiative demonstrates the District's commitment to reviewing all operational areas—including extracurricular programs—to identify responsible cost containment opportunities while ensuring that students continue to have access to programs that support their academic, social, and personal development.

The District remains committed to balancing fiscal responsibility with the preservation of programs that contribute meaningfully to student engagement, school attendance, and the overall educational experience.

While athletics are often categorized as extracurricular activities, they play an important role in supporting the broader educational mission of the District. Participation in athletics promotes student engagement, physical wellness, teamwork, leadership development, and positive school culture—all factors that contribute to improved academic outcomes and school attendance.

For many students, athletics serve as a key connection to school and provide an incentive for consistent attendance and academic effort. Research and statewide experience consistently show that students who participate in extracurricular activities demonstrate higher attendance rates, lower disciplinary incidents, and stronger overall engagement in school.

In a district such as Lakewood, where addressing chronic absenteeism and improving student engagement remain key priorities, maintaining access to athletics and other extracurricular opportunities is an important component of supporting student success.

Accordingly, while the District remains committed to identifying responsible cost efficiencies within the athletics program, the complete removal or prolonged suspension of athletics programs could have unintended educational consequences that may undermine broader efforts to improve student outcomes.

The District therefore believes that a balanced approach—focusing on operational efficiencies rather than program elimination—is the most responsible strategy, allowing the District to maintain meaningful student opportunities while continuing to implement fiscally responsible practices.

This approach reflects the District's ongoing commitment to both fiscal responsibility and the constitutional obligation to provide a Thorough and Efficient education for all students.

Fiscal Actions Already Implemented by the District in 2025-2026

Proactive Measures Taken to Improve Fiscal Stability

Over the past year, the Lakewood School District has taken significant steps to address its fiscal challenges through proactive decision-making and responsible financial management. These actions were initiated by the District administration and Board of Education as part of a broader effort to stabilize district finances while protecting educational programs and services for students.

Importantly, these measures were implemented without direction from the State Monitors, demonstrating the District's commitment to responsible governance and fiscal stewardship.

Major Fiscal Actions Implemented

Closure of Two School Facilities (Saving of approximately $37,000,000)

During the past year, the District made the difficult decision to close two school buildings following a review of facility utilization and operational costs.

The closure of these facilities resulted in:

- Reduced operational and maintenance costs
- Consolidation of district programs
- Improved utilization of remaining district facilities
- Long-term operational efficiencies.

School closures represent one of the most difficult decisions a district can make. However, the District determined that these actions were necessary to ensure responsible financial management.

Reduction in Force (RIF) Due to Facility Consolidation

As a direct result of the school closures and to avoid duplication of services, the District implemented a Reduction in Force (RIF) affecting certain staff positions, including Five (5) administrators (Savings of over $1,000,000), paraprofessionals, security, secretaries, teachers, etc.

This action ensured that:

• Staffing levels aligned with current facility utilization
• Duplication of services was eliminated
• Personnel expenditures were reduced where operationally feasible.

The District took these actions carefully and responsibly to maintain necessary services while improving fiscal efficiency.

Termination of a Long-Term Building Lease (Savings of Approximately $600,000.00 annually)

The District also concluded the final year of a leased school facility, eliminating an ongoing financial obligation.

Ending the lease resulted in:

• Elimination of recurring lease payment/s
• Reduction of operational expenses associated with the facility
• Consolidation of programs into district-owned buildings.

This action further reduced long-term facility costs.

Strategic Management of District-Owned Properties

The District has also undertaken a comprehensive review of its real estate assets to determine whether underutilized properties could be monetized to support fiscal stabilization.

As part of this process:

• Two district properties were publicly advertised and bid twice in accordance with statutory requirements (EGC & LECC)
• The District is currently proceeding with the sale of one property. (LECC)
• The District is actively negotiating the potential sale of a second property. (EGC)

In addition, the District has placed two smaller district-owned properties out for public bid.

These actions demonstrate the District's commitment to responsibly managing its assets and generating revenue through the sale of underutilized properties.

The District also reviewed the structure of its Extended School Year (ESY) program.

The District will transition from a 30-day ESY program to a 20-day program, while continuing to ensure that all services required under students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) are provided.

This adjustment allows the District to:

• Maintain required special education services
• Improve program efficiency
• Reduce operational costs associated with extended programming.

Commitment to Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

The District remains committed to ensuring that students with disabilities are educated in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) while receiving a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) as required under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

As a result of the District's efforts to appropriately place students in programs aligned with their needs, there are currently approximately 40+ active due process cases.

While due process matters present operational challenges, they also demonstrate the District's commitment to ensuring that placement decisions are made based on individual student needs and compliance with federal and state law, including IDEA and N.J.A.C. 6A:14.

Strategic Significance

These actions demonstrate that the Lakewood School District has already taken substantial and often difficult steps within areas of local control to address its fiscal challenges.

These initiatives included:

• School closures
• Staff reductions through a Reduction in Force
• Lease termination
• Asset monetization through property sales
• Public bidding of additional district-owned properties
• Programmatic efficiencies in Extended School Year services
• Continued commitment to special education compliance and LRE placement decisions.

Commitment to Responsible Governance

The District will continue to pursue responsible fiscal management while ensuring that students receive the educational programs and services required under state and federal law.

These actions demonstrate that the District has already taken meaningful steps to improve fiscal stability through local leadership, proactive planning, and responsible governance.

Fiscal Responsibility and District Commitment

The Lakewood School District has taken substantial and measurable steps to reduce expenditures within areas of local control. These actions include restructuring administrative staffing, reducing positions, reviewing paraprofessional staffing assignments, and expanding in-district special education programs to reduce reliance on high-cost out-of-district placements.

Notably, the District has implemented reductions at the administrative and operational levels, eliminating leadership and support positions while maintaining classroom instruction and required student services. These actions reflect the District's commitment to responsible fiscal management and its willingness to make difficult decisions in order to preserve educational programs for students.

Despite these efforts, the District's financial challenges remain primarily driven by costs mandated by statute and regulation, including out-of-district special education placements, nonpublic transportation obligations, charter school payments, and state aid loan repayments. For the 2026–2027 school year, these mandated expenditures total approximately $176,148,044, representing the majority of the District's operating budget.

Accordingly, while the District continues to implement meaningful cost containment strategies, long-term fiscal stability will require continued collaboration with the New Jersey Department of Education to address structural cost drivers that remain outside the District's control.

The Lakewood School District remains committed to working collaboratively with the State to ensure both fiscal responsibility and the continued provision of a Thorough and Efficient education for all students.

Out Of District ESTIMATED COST SAVINGS

Five year plan	
Year 1 (2026-2027)	
Out of District Special Education Savings	$6,300,000
Para OOD	$1,050,000
Nursing OOD	$335,000
Net Savings after Year 1	**$7,685,000**
Year 2 (2027-2028)	
Out of District Special Education Savings	$6,300,000
Para OOD	$1,050,000
Nursing OOD	$335,000
Net Savings after Year 2	**$15,370,000**
Year 3 (2028-2029)	
Out of District Special Education Savings	$6,300,000
Para OOD	$1,050,000
Nursing OOD	$335,000
Net Savings after Year 3	**$20,055,000**
Year 4 (2029-2030)	
Out of District Special Education Savings	$6,300,000
Para OOD	$1,050,000
Nursing OOD	$335,000
Yearly Savings after Year 4	**$30,740,000**

Year 5 (2030-2031)	
Out of District Special Education Savings	$6,300,000
Para OOD	$1,050,000
Nursing OOD	$335,000
Yearly Savings after Year 5	**$38,425,000**

Source: Special Services

Plan	Description	Potential Impact
Continue to expand district programs to support students from OOD	The District will continue to expand its current special education programming to serve a greater number of students in-district, including those who may have otherwise been placed out of district (OOD). By strengthening internal capacity and broadening the range of services offered, the District anticipates a reduction in out-of-district placements of approximately 8-10 percent per year.	A reduction in high-cost placements will result in lower per-pupil expenditures. Approximately $6,300,000 each year.
Reduce reliance of 1:1 Paraprofessionals in OOD Programs	Ongoing review of the need for 1:1 paraprofessional support in out-of-district placements, with plans to gradually fade or adjust support levels as appropriate, based on student data and increasing independence.	Decreases staffing-related costs within OOD placements while promoting student independence and more appropriate levels of support. Approximately $1,050,000 each year.
Review and Optimize 1:1 Nursing Services in OOD Programs	Conduct a comprehensive clinical review of all current 1:1 nursing assignments within Out-of-District (OOD) programs to continue to ensure medical necessity and appropriate utilization. Evaluate whether each student's needs continue to require dedicated 1:1 nursing support or if care can be safely and effectively delivered through alternative models. Where clinically appropriate, explore the implementation of shared nursing arrangements, in which a single nurse supports multiple students with compatible care needs and schedules.	Reduction in high-cost 1:1 nursing assignments through appropriate services and increased use of shared nursing models. Approximately $335,000
Cap Tuition Rates for OOD Schools	Advocate for the state-level implementation of a cap on Out-of-District (OOD) tuition rates for Approved Private Schools for Students with Disabilities (APSSDs), and for increased transparency, accountability, and alignment in the auditing of APSSDs. Such audits should include clear comparisons between the	Implementing greater oversight and accountability in the determination and auditing of Out-of-District (OOD) tuition rates would have a significant fiscal and programmatic impact on school districts. By ensuring that tuition charges are directly aligned with the services mandated in a student's Individualized Education Program

	services mandated in a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) and the services actually provided and billed to the district. This approach will ensure that school districts are responsible only for the costs associated with implementing a student's IEP and are not required to pay for services or program elements that exceed those mandates or constitute non-essential expenditures.	(IEP), districts would be protected from absorbing costs associated with services, staffing structures, or program elements that are not required to implement the student's educational plan. Establishing clearer auditing standards and reasonable limits on Approved Private School for Students with Disabilities (APSSD) tuition rates would promote transparency, improve fiscal stewardship of public funds, and ensure that special education expenditures remain focused on delivering the services necessary to support student success. For districts with a large number of students requiring specialized services, these reforms would help stabilize special education costs, reduce unnecessary financial burdens, and allow districts to reinvest resources into strengthening in-district programs that provide high-quality services closer to home while maintaining full compliance with federal and state special education mandates.

District-Controlled Cost Initiatives Savings

IN DISTRICT SAVINGS	
District Paraprofessional Change 29.5 hours a week, reducing medical benefits Pending Negotiations	$6,589,876.16
Administrative Reductions (4 Assistant Principal & 3 Supervisor Positions)	$895,062.20
Athletics Reductions	$200,000.00
Extracurricular Reductions	$50,000.00
Staff Reductions	$5,124,755
CST 11-month to 10-Month Contract **Pending Negotiations	$225,596.87
Total In-District Savings- 2026-2027	$13,085,290.23
Potential Out-of-District Savings	$7,685,000.00
Total Combined Savings (**May change based on negotiations)	$20,770,290.23

5 YEAR PLAN - ESTIMATED EDUCATION COST SAVINGS SUMMARY

Year 1 (2026-2027)	
Total OOD Special Education Savings after Year 1	$7,685,000
Total In-District Cost Savings	$13,085,290.23
Net Reduction of Budget after Year 1	$20,770,290.23
Year 2 (2027-2028)	
Total OOD Special Education Savings after Year 2	$15,370,000

Total In-District Cost Savings	$13,085,290.23
Net Reduction of Budget after Year 2	$28,455,290.13
Year 3 (2028-2029)	
Total OOD Special Education Savings after Year 3	$20,055,000
Total In-District Cost Savings	$13,085,290.23
Net Reduction of Budget after Year 3	$33,140,290.23
Year 4 (2029-2030)	
Total OOD Special Education Savings after Year 4	$30,810,000
Total In-District Cost Savings	$13,085,290.23
Net Reduction of Budget after Year 4	$43,895,290.23
Year 5 (2030-2031)	
Total OOD Special Education Savings after Year 5	$38,425,000
Total In-District Cost Savings	$13,085,290.23
Net Reduction of Budget after Year 5	$51,510,290.23

The Continuation of

2025-2026

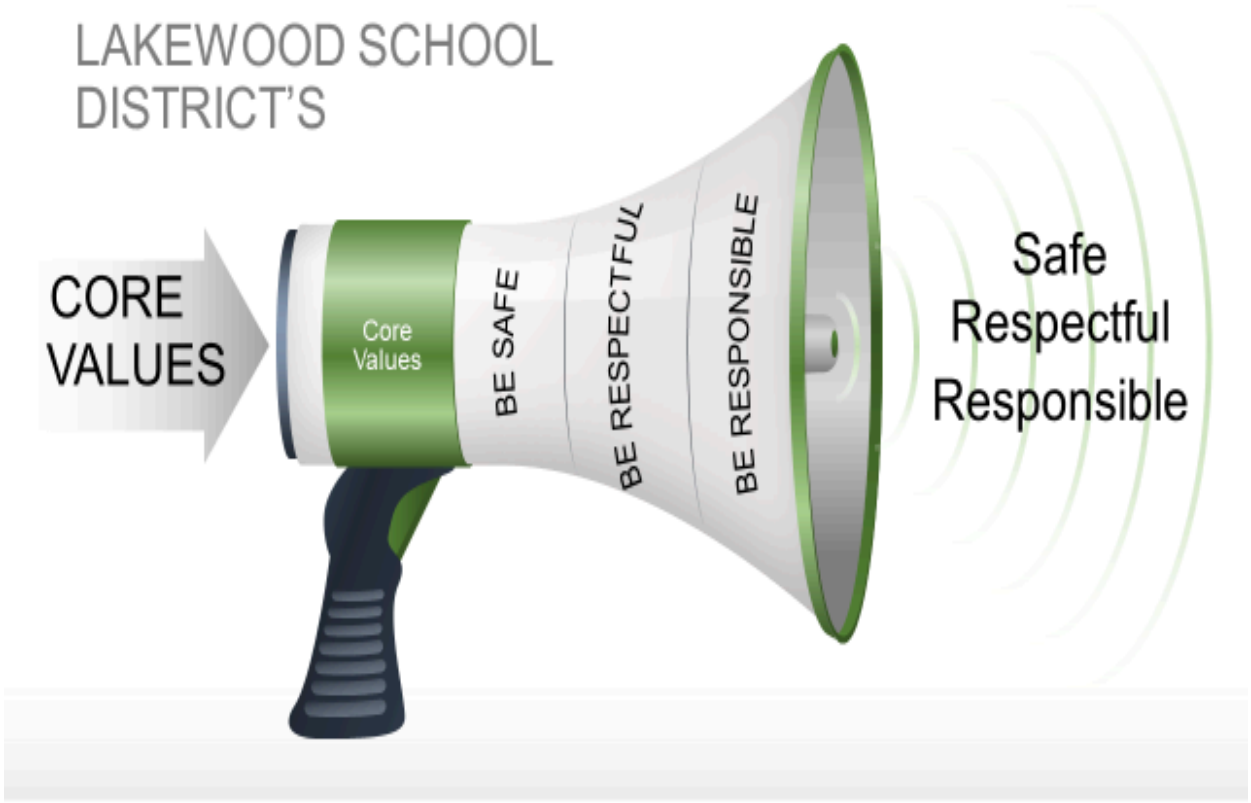
Counseling & Mental Health Programs

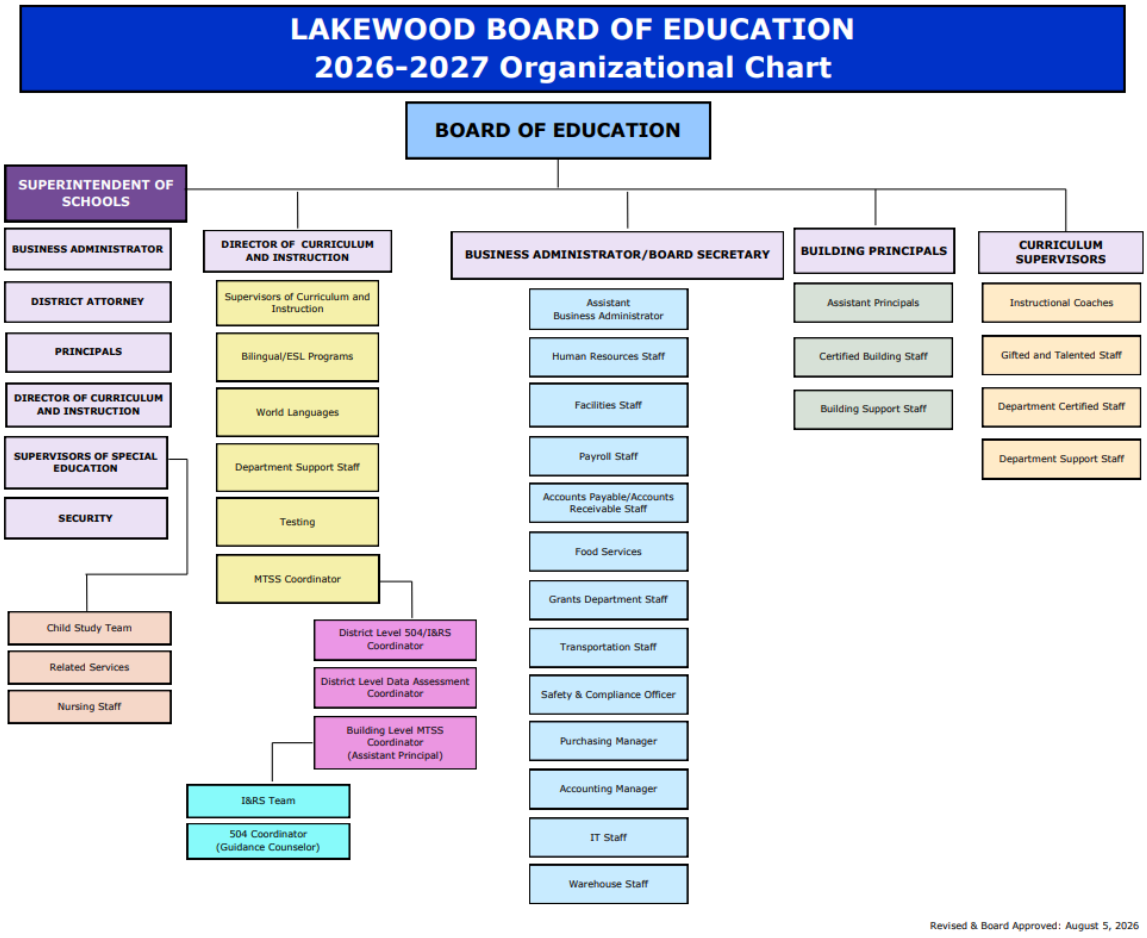
for Students & Families

School/Building	Counseling/Mental Health Programs
Lakewood High School	· Preferred School Based Counseling · Behavior Therapy Associates · Enhancing School Mental Health Service Project (NJDOE & The Rutgers Center for Comprehensive School Mental Health) · Social Worker · Guidance Counselors · SAC · RETHINK SEL & Mental Health Program · Dr. S. Dyckman/FTR (Child & Adolescent Psychiatrist) · Preferred Behavioral FTR · Behaviorist, as needed

Lakewood Middle School	· Behavior Therapy Associates · Social Worker · 3 Guidance Counselors (6,7&8) · SAC · RETHINK SEL & Mental Health Program · Dr. S. Dyckman/FTR (Child & Adolescent Psychiatrist) · Preferred Behavioral FTR · Behaviorist, as needed
Oak Street School	· Enhancing School Mental Health Service Project (NJDOE & The Rutgers Center for Comprehensive School Mental Health) · Social Worker · SAC · Guidance Counselor · RETHINK SEL & Mental Health Program · Dr. S. Dyckman/FTR (Child & Adolescent Psychiatrist) · Preferred Behavioral FTR · Behaviorist, as needed

Clifton Avenue Grade School	· Social Worker SAC · Guidance Counselor · RETHINK SEL & Mental Health Program · Dr. S. Dyckman/FTR · Preferred Behavioral FTR · Behaviorist, as needed
Spruce Street School	· Enhancing School Mental Health Service Project (NJDOE & The Rutgers Center for Comprehensive School Mental Health) · Social Worker · Guidance Counselor · RETHINK SEL & Mental Health Program · Dr. S. Dyckman/FTR · Preferred Behavioral FTR · Behaviorist, as needed


LAKEWOOD SCHOOL DISTRICT'S
CORE VALUES
Core Values
BE SAFE
BE RESPECTFUL
BE RESPONSIBLE
Safe
Respectful
Responsible


LAKEWOOD BOARD OF EDUCATION
2026-2027 Organizational Chart
BOARD OF EDUCATION
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS
BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR
DISTRICT ATTORNEY
PRINCIPALS
DIRECTOR OF CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION
SUPERVISORS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION
SECURITY
Child Study Team
Related Services
Nursing Staff
DIRECTOR OF CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION
Supervisors of Curriculum and Instruction
Bilingual/ESL Programs
World Languages
Department Support Staff
Testing
MTSS Coordinator
District Level 504/I&RS Coordinator
District Level Data Assessment Coordinator
Building Level MTSS Coordinator (Assistant Principal)
I&RS Team
504 Coordinator (Guidance Counselor)
BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR/BOARD SECRETARY
Assistant Business Administrator
Human Resources Staff
Facilities Staff
Payroll Staff
Accounts Payable/Accounts Receivable Staff
Food Services
Grants Department Staff
Transportation Staff
Safety & Compliance Officer
Purchasing Manager
Accounting Manager
IT Staff
Warehouse Staff
BUILDING PRINCIPALS
Assistant Principals
Certified Building Staff
Building Support Staff
CURRICULUM SUPERVISORS
Instructional Coaches
Gifted and Talented Staff
Department Certified Staff
Department Support Staff
Revised & Board Approved: August 5, 2026

District Launch of the Five-Year Roadmap

The Lakewood School District's Five-Year Plan proceeded through the following review and approval process:

- **April 29, 2026:** The Lakewood Board of Education approved the Five-Year Plan. The State Monitor subsequently placed the Plan "Under Advisement."
- **May 27, 2026:** The Board approved a revised version of the Five-Year Plan. The State Monitor continued to hold the Plan "Under Advisement."
- **August 24, 2026:** The State Monitor issued written approval of the Five-Year Plan.
- **September 23, 2026** - Presented at the Board of Education Meeting

When the State Monitor places an agenda item "Under Advisement," the item may not be implemented or acted upon by the Superintendent or District Administration until the State Monitor issues written approval.

With written approval now received from both the Board of Education and the State Monitor, the District may formally launch the Five-Year Roadmap and begin implementing its approved strategic priorities. Individual actions requiring additional funding, contracts, personnel decisions, policy changes, or other formal authorization will continue to be presented through the applicable Board, State Monitor, NJDOE, procurement, and legal approval processes.

Five-Year Roadmap: Stakeholder Launch and Engagement

Approval of the Five-Year Plan marks the beginning of the District's implementation journey. Throughout the five-year period, stakeholders will have meaningful opportunities to:

- Provide input on the Plan's implementation;
- Identify emerging needs and priorities;
- Recommend potential programs and community partnerships; and
- Help the District evaluate its progress and strengthen future actions.

Districtwide Launch of the Five-Year Plan

September 23, 2026 — Lakewood Board of Education Meeting

The District formally launched the Five-Year Plan during the September 23, 2026, Board of Education meeting, with a focus on Year 1 implementation priorities and next steps.

To promote transparency, engagement, and community access:

- The presentation was livestreamed for Lakewood residents, families, students, staff, and taxpayers;
- The Five-Year Plan is posted on the District's website in English and Spanish; and
- A Community Feedback Survey was distributed to students, staff, and parents/guardians on September 24, 2026, to gather input that will help guide implementation.
- The Community Feedback Survey is posted on the District website.
    - https://forms.gle/aySL47sqeMPG9PVd6

The Five-Year Strategic Plan is aligned with and supported by the following District planning and accountability frameworks:

- The 2026–2027 Superintendent's Goals;
  2026-2027 Superintendent Goals FINAL August 26 2026.pdf
- The 2026–2027 Board of Education Goals; and
  2026-2027 Board Goals FINAL August 26, 2026.pdf
- The 2026–2027 New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum (NJQSAC) District Improvement Plan.
  NJQSAC - 2026-2027 District Improvement Plan (DIP).xlsx
- 2026-2027 District PDP 2026-2027 District PDP July 16, 2026 with LINKS.pdf

This alignment promotes a unified Districtwide focus, measurable accountability, and coordinated implementation of the District's strategic priorities.