

Creating a Strategic Plan for the North Hunterdon – Voorhees Regional High School District

Session 1 of 3

What Are the Strengths, Achievements, and Challenges of the North Hunterdon – Voorhees Regional High School District?

On January 24, 2018, North Hunterdon-Voorhees Regional High School District administration, Board of Education members, staff, parents and community members came together to initiate strategic planning. The first evening's topic was focused on the strengths, achievements, and challenges of the North Hunterdon-Voorhees Regional High School District. The meeting began with a welcome and introductions by Board of Education President, Francis Goger, and then Jeffrey Bender, Superintendent of Schools, presented an excellent overview of the current "state of the schools." Gwen Thornton, assisted by Maryann Friedman, New Jersey School Boards Association representatives, reviewed the strategic planning process the group would be undertaking.

Forty-seven participants then gathered in randomly assigned groups to identify the strengths/achievements and challenges of the North Hunterdon-Voorhees Regional High School District through brainstorming and the sharing of ideas. After discussion, each group came to a consensus of its top 10 strengths/achievements and top 10 challenges and presented those to all meeting participants.

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

Group Consensus

Strengths / Accomplishments and Challenges

Orange Dot Group:

Strengths / Accomplishments (Top Ten)

- Academic excellence
- Articulation K-12
- Great kids
- Great staff
- College prep
- Technology
- Support for CTE (Career and Technological Education)
- Special class programs
- Extra-curricular activities
- Strong community support
- Course offerings

Challenges (Top Ten)

- Helicopter parents
- Articulation for other subjects
- Aging facilities
- Decrease enrollment
- Unknown political environment
- Finances / taxes
- Assessments (moving target)
- Anxiety
- Unrealistic expectations
- Student engagement (especially with students in the middle)
- Increase community involvement

Green Dot Team

Strengths / Accomplishments (Top Ten)

- Administrative commitment and desire to expose students to Real World experiences and partnerships with businesses (practical opportunities)
- Clubs and activities – availability and promotion; clubs for everyone – not if, but which clubs to join?
- Support of the community
- Dedication to community service! School Spirit, Community Spirit
- Collaboration effort of K-12 efforts to get into not only 7th and 8th but earlier
- Impact of 1:1 technology policy
- Safe environment

Challenges (Top Ten)

- Continue to identify and develop new programs for students to build career skills and team work
- Improve connections between younger grades – to transition, to outreach and collaboration, ex. BioMed prep encourage programs early
- How to encourage “community engagement” up from the lower levels
- Inter-District collaboration
- Peer Role Models?!
- Vaping in schools
- Could we expand diversify and personalize student experiences
- Is there more we can do to assist in addressing substance abuse issues early (elementary PTAs?)

Red Dot Team:

Strengths / Accomplishments (Top Ten)

- Innovative district
- Chromebooks to All
- Strong music and sports and activities programs
- Strong community service
- Blue Ribbon
- Large variety and quantity of AP courses

North Hunterdon-Voorhees High School District Strategic Planning Meeting #1 Outcomes

- Increase parent involvement and input
- Good school pride levels
- Intro of 4 year academies
- Polytech options
- School Resource Officers at each high school
- Support from Prosecutor's office with schools

Challenges:

- Resistance to articulation among some sending districts
- Some aspects of the facilities (e.g. basement classrooms at NHHS)
- Need more mental health assistance esp. stress reduction
- Need more college planning / guidance and outreach
- Equalize testing scores and rank (VHS and NHHS)
- Formally solicit feedback from students at end of each class and have results go to Dept. Heads
- Review electives regularly to ensure appropriate selection
- Manage homework loads
- Bus ride time between Polytech & NHHS / VHS

Black Dot Team

Strengths / Accomplishments (Top 10)

- Extra-curricular opportunities – there and taken
- Academics – rigor and breadth – students can excel and succeed
- Students and families care about school
- Strong “North” name – Academics
- Technology: one-to-one
- New Science sequencing
- Special Education Programs
- Communications
- Poly Tech Programs and Academies

Challenges (Top 10)

- Aging facilities (how will our facilities evolve)

North Hunterdon-Voorhees High School District Strategic Planning Meeting #1 Outcomes

- Technology: keeping up and using – in classroom and security
- Progressive pedagogy for curriculum – consistency in teaching
- Keeping up with trends / techniques in rapidly changing environment to help our students not only graduate but be successful productive citizens
- Stress – very busy, piles on
- Engage all students for post-grad, e.g. non-college bound, kids in the middle

Blue Dot Team

Strengths / Accomplishments (Top 10)

- Sense of community
- Invested interest (students)
- Engaged teachers
- Extracurricular activities (supports / clubs / events)
- Administrative support for staff
- Inclusive setting and activities for many different students (unified sports programs, etc.)

Challenges (Top 10)

- Many different sending districts (10) – both academic and social
- Parent involvement (encourage participation)
- Drugs / awareness / testing – proactive (making community aware)
- New educational changes at state and federal levels
- Achievement gaps (especially the students in the middle)

Following each group reporting out on their consensus points, the following **common themes emerged from multiple groups:**

- Strong academic and co-curricular programming
- Supportive community and dedicated staff and administration
- Technology
- Varied course offerings to meet needs of all learners
- Increasing articulation and inter-district collaboration
- Addressing declining enrollment
- Maintaining and upgrading facilities and technology

North Hunterdon-Voorhees High School District Strategic Planning Meeting #1 Outcomes

- Closing achievement gaps
- Addressing student stress; substance abuse prevention
- Financial constraints, state and federal mandates

The second strategic planning session is scheduled for:

Tuesday, February 13, 2018 from 6:30 check-in, 6:45– 8:15 PM – Voorhees HS,
New Cafeteria

Meetings are scheduled for 1.5 hours. Meetings start and end promptly.

During the February 13th meeting, we will create a shared vision together for the future of the North Hunterdon-Voorhees Regional High School District . . . we will talk about our aspirations and expectations for our students and school district.

We look forward to seeing you!