

# **North Hunterdon-Voorhees Regional High School District Strategic Planning**

## **State of the Schools Report 2018**

The North Hunterdon-Voorhees Regional High School District consists of two high schools: North Hunterdon High School and Voorhees High School. The total district enrollment is 2,783 students. North Hunterdon High School currently has an enrollment of 1,739 students, and Voorhees High School currently has an enrollment of 1,044 students. The district receives students from eleven different elementary school districts and ten different middle schools. Students from twelve different municipalities attend the high school district.

The district offers a comprehensive academic program for students of all abilities and interests, from Advanced Placement courses to fine arts and music electives to vocational courses at Hunterdon County Polytech to programs for students with autism or multiple disabilities. For the Class of 2017, 96% of North Hunterdon graduates and 90% of Voorhees graduates indicated they are pursuing post-secondary education. North Hunterdon-Voorhees is a 1:1 district, meaning all students are provided with a Chromebook, or they can bring their own device, to use in class and at home. The high schools offer students an array of extra-curricular activities from which to choose. There are 16 different types of sports offered at both schools (North Hunterdon also offers gymnastics), each offering multiple levels (i.e. freshman, junior varsity and varsity). Over 60% of students participate in athletics, cheerleading and marching band. There are over 50 clubs and activities offered, and over 70% of students participate in at least one club or activity each year.

In this report, you will find an overview of the state of our high school district in the areas of the educational program, articulation with sending districts, technology, human resources and professional development, finance and facilities, and school and community relations.

### **EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM**

The two schools in the district offer comprehensive educational programs that are based in the New Jersey Student Learning Standards. These standards were most recently reviewed and revised by the state of New Jersey in 2014 (and 2016 for English Language Arts and Mathematics). Students are required to successfully complete 120 credits, including five credits of Language Arts and Health and Physical Education every year. Students are also required to to successfully complete three years of Science, Mathematics, and Social Studies. Students must also successfully complete one year of a World Language and one semester of Financial Literacy. The remaining credits are completed from a variety of electives in Fine, Practical, and Performing Arts, as well as electives within each academic discipline. Students in the district have the opportunity to earn college credits for a variety of courses through both Seton Hall and Raritan Valley Community College.

In addition to the courses offered in the high schools, students are also able to participate in a variety of one- or two-year half-day programs at Hunterdon County Polytech Career and Technical School. Polytech houses two of their four-year academies (Biomedical Science Academy at North Hunterdon and, starting in the 2018-19 school year, Computer Science Academy at Voorhees) in the North Hunterdon-Voorhees district.

Two changes that were made for the 2017-2018 school year are a new bell schedule and a new science sequence. Both schools had previously had nine forty-minute periods every day. Now, the schools follow a rolling drop-block schedule. There are four morning classes and four afternoon classes, although only three of the four meet every day (for a total of six classes every day). The classes are now 55 minutes in length. Over the course of the year, this change adds up to an additional week of instruction.

The science sequence had been Physics, Chemistry, and Biology, but the results showed that the students did not have the Math background needed to be successful in Physics. As a result, starting with the 2017-2018 school year, the district has switched to a sequence of Biology, Chemistry, and Physics.

Another change that was made to the educational program for the 2017-2018 school year was a change to the administrative structure. In the past, the district had subject-area supervisors in each school. Most recently, those school-based supervisors became district supervisors so that one supervisor was responsible for the same subject at both schools. The supervisors were eliminated for the 2017-2018 school year, and the number of assistant principals at each building was increased from two to four. Now, the assistant principals oversee the departments. This change led to the creation of a new position: Director of Curriculum, Articulation, and Student Achievement.

Students in both schools participate in a variety of standardized assessments. Two tests that have been required by the state are the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) test and the New Jersey Biology Competency Test (NJBCT). Students enrolled in the following courses take the PARCC tests for those subjects: Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, English Language Arts 9, English Language Arts 10, and English Language Arts 11. With the exception of Algebra I (since our best-performing students take that PARCC assessment in middle school), the district's PARCC scores significantly exceed the state and cross-state averages. Students taking the NJBCT significantly exceeded students in the state and in our District Factor Group (I). Starting with the 2017-2018 school year, the NJBCT is being replaced by the New Jersey Student Learning Standards - Science test, which is a comprehensive science test for juniors.

These are the results from the 2017 administration of these assessments:

<b>Algebra I</b>	NHHS	VHS	State	Cross-State
Average Score	742	744	743	738
% 4 and 5	42%	39%	42%	36%

(meets and exceeds expectations)				
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<b>Geometry</b>	NHHS	VHS	State	Cross-State
Average Score	752	748	734	735
% 4 and 5 (meets and exceeds expectations)	57%	50%	30%	32%

<b>Algebra II</b>	NHHS	VHS	State	Cross-State
Average Score	774	761	723	723
% 4 and 5 (meets and exceeds expectations)	78%	64%	27%	27%

<b>ELA 9</b>	NHHS	VHS	State	Cross-State
Average Score	762	758	748	741
% 4 and 5 (meets and exceeds expectations)	66%	63%	51%	43%

<b>ELA 10</b>	NHHS	VHS	State	Cross-State
Average Score	772	750	741	741
% 4 and 5 (meets and exceeds expectations)	74%	52%	45%	45%

<b>ELA 11</b>	NHHS	VHS	State	Cross-State
Average Score	759	759	735	734
% 4 and 5 (meets and exceeds expectations)	58%	65%	37%	37%

expectations)				
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<b>NJBCT</b>	NHHS	VHS	State	DFG (I)
Advanced Proficient	35%	33.1%	15.9%	30%
Proficient	47.5%	52.5%	42.2%	49.9%
Partially Proficient	17.5%	14.5%	41.9%	20%

Many students also participate in the Advanced Placement program, including taking the AP exams in May. This is an overview of the 2016-2017 Advanced Placement programs at both schools:

North Hunterdon:

- 501 students took 1,112 AP exams
- 81.8% of students taking the exam scored 3 or higher (compared to 70.8% in New Jersey)
- 77.6% of the student population in grades 11-12 took at least one AP course (from 2015-2016 New Jersey School Performance Report)

Voorhees:

- 201 students took 432 AP exams
- 89.6% of students taking the exam scored 3 or higher (compared to 70.8% in New Jersey)
- 56.9% of the student population in grades 11-12 took at least one AP course (from 2015-2016 New Jersey School Performance Report)

Finally, many students take the SAT. These are the results reported in the 2015-2016 New Jersey School Performance Reports:

<b>SAT</b>	NHHS	VHS	State
Reading and Writing	600	594	537
Math	607	591	538

According to the 2015-2016 New Jersey School Performance Reports, the 2015-2016 graduation rate was 97.4% for North Hunterdon and 96.1% for Voorhees.

Both high schools are accredited by Middle States, and both high schools have been selected as National Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence (North Hunterdon in 2001 and Voorhees in 2015). In “The Top 100 Public High Schools in New Jersey” article in the September 2016 *New Jersey Monthly* magazine, North Hunterdon was ranked 39th and Voorhees was ranked 53rd. In

Newsweek magazine's 2016 ranking of the country's best public high schools, the North Hunterdon-Voorhees district was ranked 233rd.

**ARTICULATION**

The North Hunterdon-Voorhees superintendent and the superintendents of the eleven sending districts have identified articulation as a priority. The superintendents all realize that students will be more successful as they transition to the high school when teachers and administrators from the districts collaborate throughout the year. A new position was created for the 2017-2018 school year to help facilitate effective articulation among the districts: Director of Curriculum, Articulation, and Student Achievement. This position allows one person to oversee everything related to articulation.

Another important change for the 2017-2018 school year is the creation of two new positions: a Math teacher coach and an English teacher coach. These teachers primarily work with the middle schools and their teachers to help make sure students enter the high school prepared to be successful in their freshman English and Math classes. These teacher coaches are the link that connects the middle schools to one another and to the high schools. The teacher coaches are able to help facilitate the sharing of materials and best practices between the middle schools, and they are also able to help inform the freshman teachers about what the students learn in 8th grade. As a result of the creation of these positions, the North Hunterdon-Voorhees district knows much more about what happens in 8th grade than it ever knew before.

The two main goals related to articulation are increasing the amount of subject-area articulation meetings and increasing the attendance at articulation meetings. The below chart shows the articulation meetings held during the 2016-2017 school year and the goal for meetings during the 2017-2018 school year.

Subject	Meetings in 2016-17	Attendance %	Meetings in 2017-18
Superintendents	7		11
STEM	1	50%	2
Science	3	53%	3
World Language	1	33%	2
Math	3	78%	3
Social Studies	1	33%	2
Special Education	9	71%	9
English	4	54%	3
Guidance	4	65%	4
Health/PE	0	-	1

Music	0	-	1
Art	0	-	1
Library/Media	0	-	1
Total	33		43

The main goals for the subject-area articulation meetings are to ensure proper placement for students in their 9th-grade classes and to share best practices to increase student achievement. For subjects that have multiple articulation meetings, the meetings after the first one will focus on data analysis of standardized assessment results to help improve student achievement and collaborating on the curriculum for the subject.

### Summary

#### Educational Program

Strengths	Challenges
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Offering a comprehensive program to students</li> <li>2. A strong Advanced Placement program</li> <li>3. Continuous refinement of curriculum maps to improve instruction</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students entering the district at different skill levels because of the differences between the sending schools</li> <li>2. Implementing Next Generation Science Standards</li> <li>3. Integrating STEM and the arts across disciplines</li> </ol>

#### Articulation

Strengths	Challenges
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. English and Math teacher coaches working with the sending schools</li> <li>2. Regular subject-area articulation meetings</li> <li>3. Regular articulation meetings with sending school superintendents</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Inconsistent cooperation and collaboration with the sending schools</li> <li>2. Meetings taking teachers out of the classroom and costing money for a substitute</li> <li>3. Getting twelve districts to have the same schedule for professional development</li> </ol>

## TECHNOLOGY

### Overview

Almost all aspects of school operations involve the use of some digital technology tool. Casual observation of the daily life at North Hunterdon and Voorhees will show that the District currently

utilizes a wide range of technology tools on a daily basis to: support instruction, infuse 21st century skills in our student population, improve and maintain job efficiency in our staff, provide security to our campuses, and enhance communication between staff, students and the community. The District is currently able to provide this wide variety of technological tools based on a strong technology infrastructure built over time. The following are some key technology tools currently in use at the District:

- The District currently runs a 1:1/BYOD program where students are provided a Chromebook or allowed to bring their own Chromebook to school for daily use in the classroom and at home.
  - 93% of students report using their Chromebooks daily in the classroom.
  - 60% teachers show augmented technology use in the SAMR<sup>1</sup> scale.
- The District has a strong and flexible Student Information System called Aspen that securely maintains all our student records and connects student, staff, and family members.
  - All academic records are maintained electronically in Aspen.
  - Health, Technology, and Athletics forms are delivered/collected electronically using Aspen.
  - Parent/Guardians receive an academic report for each student twice a month from the data collected in Aspen.
- The District currently provides to staff and students multiple instructional software and access to software as a service (SaaS) solutions in the Internet: Google Docs, Google Classroom, Kahoot, Online Textbooks, Quia, etc.
  - Our students work on an average of 9,000 Google Documents each week during the school year.
  - There is a daily average of 27,000 students who visit Google Classrooms.
- The District currently provides A/V technology in each classroom to enhance instruction.
  - At least a projector and DVD player are available in each classroom.
- The District provides each faculty member with a computer to aid in instruction and in their professional duties.
  - 83% of teachers believe that computers and technology enhance their daily life.
- The District provides 1,500Mbps of Internet bandwidth between both schools, wireless networking across campuses, redundant phone service with emergency notification; as well as local and cloud storage for staff, students, and the community.
  - 60% of teachers say Internet speed at school is above average.

## Case Score

Since 2013, the District utilizes an electronic survey platform called Clarity to gather information about technology use in the District in order to identify strengths and challenges and plan accordingly. The survey platform looks at four different aspects of technology use in school: classroom use, access to technology, skill level of users, and environment. Based on the survey results, the platform establishes a CASE score for the District as an indicator of effective

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<sup>1</sup> SAMR is a four-tier model designed to guide educators as they integrate technology in their classrooms—moving from basic task substitution to actual redefinition. The SAMR scale is used in the Clarity platform the District utilize to measure Technology use.

technology use in the schools. The CASE score is the primary tool currently used at NHV to assess the state of Technology in the District.

Based on the CASE score, the District has improved since 2013 growing from a 1050 to a 1085 CASE score, which the software classifies as “proficient” and close to “advanced”.



## Challenges

The Clarity surveys show that the District offers strong access to technology and a fostering environment for its use. And while student and staff use these tools proficiently, there is room for growth so the majority of users achieve advanced or exemplary use of technology. In pursuit of that, three main challenges have been identified. These challenges focus on leveraging the technological tools the District offers. They are:

- Provide to students and families a more cohesive integration of the multiple technological tools currently used across the District.
- Leverage technology tools to enhance the collection and analysis of instructional data, both to faculty and administration.
- Improve delivery of Professional Development on Technology to all staff for continuous, personalized PD.

## **HUMAN RESOURCES AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

### Human Resources

The North Hunterdon-Voorhees Regional High School District consists of two high schools with 372 employees. The below chart shows the amount of employees in each category and also by each school:



Employee Type	District Office	North Hunterdon	Voorhees	Totals
Teachers	-	130	86	216
Educational Services Professionals	-	16	9	25
Administrators	6	6	6	18
Education Support Staff	14	21	15	50
Secretaries	9	9	9	27
Custodial Staff	-	20	16	36

Strengths:

- A well developed mentoring program that consists of two years of mentorship for new novice teachers and one year for new veteran teachers.
- Electronic application process that allows applicants to apply for vacancies and indicate interest in future openings.
- A fully staffed and highly skilled human resources department.
- Use of a outside service to provide substitute staffing services.
- A new administrative structure that provides direct support through Assistant Principals and Lead Teachers instead of content specific supervisors.
- 66% of professional staff have a Master's degree or higher.

Challenges:

- The efficient communication of information for personnel changes and updates from the employee perspective.
- Recruiting and maintaining employees based on competitive salary, especially in the mid-guide salary range.
- Integration of all human resource processes, from recruitment through employment.
- Recruiting teachers in difficult to find areas.
- Additional partnerships should be developed with colleges and universities to ensure adequate student teaching experiences and internships are available in the district.

Professional Development

The North Hunterdon-Voorhees Regional High School District has a comprehensive professional development plan. The plan is developed through a district committee, and is coordinated through a part-time Professional Development Coordinator and the Director of Curriculum, Articulation and Student Achievement.

Strengths:

- A well developed PD plan with input from many constituents throughout the district.
- Multiple half day professional development days where teachers and staff can attend in-house classes and work together and professional development projects.

- Online courses that satisfy many of the state compliance requirements for annual and semi-annual trainings.
- Support from the Board of Education for teachers and professional staff to be reimbursed for graduate courses in pursuit of higher education and continued professional growth.

Challenges:

- Targeted professional development opportunities for individuals and select groups.
- Finding flexible time for individuals to complete professional development opportunities.
- Scheduling professional development opportunities that will benefit the sending districts and increase articulation.
- Professional development opportunities should be connected to the evaluation of the employee.

**FINANCES & FACILITIES**

Encompassing nearly 180 square miles, the North Hunterdon-Voorhees Regional High School District is the State’s largest regional high school district. The District’s Board of Education, comprised of twelve elected members representing twelve communities, is also one of the largest School Boards in New Jersey.

Just as each board member has weighted voting power, ranging from 0.9 to 1.4, based primarily on the population of each community and recalculated after each U.S. Census, the local tax levy is apportioned among the communities by the State of NJ on an annual basis using criteria including student enrollment from each of the twelve communities.

In total, the six donor communities to Voorhees High School, which served 37% of the total District student population, and contributed approximately 39% of the 2016-2017 local tax levy revenue. During the same period, expenditures at Voorhees High School represented 44% of the total school allocated expenditures.

Subsequently, the six donor communities to North Hunterdon High School, which served 63% of the total District student population, contributed approximately 61% of the 2016-2017 local tax levy revenue. During the same period, expenditures at North Hunterdon High School represented 56% of the total school allocated expenditures.

Strengths -

- With the passage of the November 2016 referendum, projects that address both educational and safety needs are being completed at each school.
- The District maintains an estimated current gross debt capacity of \$233 million. This number is calculated under the Education Law as 3% of the School District’s Average Equalized Property Values for the prior three calendar years. The District’s current debt outstanding is approximately \$9 million (the current outstanding principal amount of the 2017 School Bonds issued to fund the 2016 referendum project), which is approximately 4% of the debt capacity that could be utilized to address additional capital project needs.

- Through the utilization of a food service management company, the student food service program is currently self-sustaining and does not require funding for operating expenses through the annual District budget.
- The District Administrative team actively seeks to maximize available funding by engaging in shared services agreements with the local governmental entities and through utilization of the Hunterdon County Educational Services Commission for provision of services.

Challenges -

- The negotiated bargaining agreements (school administrators, teachers, educational support personnel, secretaries, and facilities staff) expire June 30, 2018.
- Declining student enrollment - In December 2016, during an update of the District demographic study, the engaged demographer projected that by the 2021-22 school year, enrollment will decline by approximately 500 students. As enrollment declines, the District will need continue to develop and implement strategies to ensure the ongoing efficient utilization of funding, facilities, technology, and deployment of human resources.
- Addressing aging facilities - Voorhees High School built in 1973, with an addition in 1980 and North Hunterdon High School built in 1950, with additions in 1956, 1968, and 2002.
- In December 2017, during a full update of the Long Range Facilities Plan, the engaged architectural firm identified a estimated \$32.5 million of capital projects needed district-wide to maintain a safe environment that is conducive to learning.
- While the District currently maintains approximately \$7 million in capital reserve, with over \$32 million in outstanding projects, there is a funding deficit of approximately \$25.5 million needed to address these projects.
- The tax levy remains the largest source of revenue for the annual operating budget, with the current 2017-18 tax levy at approximately \$47 million. Growth of the tax levy is limited to 2% per year and based on the 2017-2018 tax levy, a 2% increase would generate approximately \$940,000 in additional revenue.

**SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS**

Though the regional high school district is spread out over about 180 square miles and 12 municipalities, there is still a strong sense of school spirit and hometown pride across the region for the high schools. This was on full display when both schools' football teams competed in their respective state championship final game at Metlife Stadium on December 2, 2017. Communities escorted the teams out of town, welcomed them home and also came to the stadium to cheer them on.

In the rural setting of northern Hunterdon County, the high schools are a focal point and utilized by over 100 community groups throughout the year for meetings, practices, fundraisers, etc. The community consists of many residents who are graduates of either North Hunterdon or Voorhees and still come out to support their alma mater. The Board has also hired many staff members who are graduates of the high schools.

Community service is a part of the culture at both high schools, with many of our student organizations raising money or collecting items to support local families and charities. For instance, every year during Spirit Fest (week of Milk Can Game), Voorhees runs a large food drive and all donations are given to the Open Cupboard Food Pantry in Clinton. Food and presents are also collected and given to local families in need during the holiday time by the Key Clubs and health offices.

Both North Hunterdon and Voorhees have active parent organizations, such as the Parent-Teacher-Student Association/Organization (PTSA/PTSO) and Music Association, as well as the athletic Booster Clubs. Through a goal in the 2012-2017 Strategic Plan, an Education Foundation was established for each high school. All of these organizations are an active and vital part of the high school district, holding events and raising money to benefit our students. Unfortunately, a few parent organizations experienced a decline in membership and have been actively recruiting new members over the last year. We hope that more parents will volunteer to be a part of these important organizations.

Another goal from the previous Strategic Plan was to put an increased focus on working with community groups and organizations to provide educational opportunities to our students. We continue to have a relationship with ExxonMobil through which students have been able to visit their facilities on field trips and female students participated in the Women in Engineering program. Through a grant from Special Olympics, our high schools launched Unified Sports in the 2016-2017 school year, which provides more opportunities for students with disabilities to participate in sports.

Over the last couple of years, the district also worked with community groups to improve our facilities for students. In 2017, North Hunterdon High School worked with the Clinton Township Committee to create a trail for our student-athletes to utilize in the Fall and Spring seasons for training, particularly for cross country and track and field. The Clinton Township Committee carved the trail on property across Regional Road and the high school district agreed to maintain it during the athletic seasons. Another community collaboration took place at Voorhees High School during the summer of 2017. The Voorhees Community Athletic Foundation (VCAF) provided excavation services and donated sod for the stadium field, at no cost to the high school. The local fire departments also helped out by visiting Voorhees to water the field. Upgrades were made to the North Hunterdon softball fields and Voorhees baseball field through fundraising efforts and assistance from the booster club and community members, at little or no cost to the district. The Education Foundations have also donated several pieces of equipment to our high schools such as a 3D printer and virtual driving simulator and provides scholarships to students.

The high school district has joint agreements with the Clinton Township Police Department and the Lebanon Township Police Department to provide and fund School Resource Officers (SRO) at both high schools. While North Hunterdon had a part-time SRO for over a decade, he has been moved to full-time status during the 2017-2018 school year. Voorhees has a full-time SRO beginning this school year.

The high school district employs a District Communications Coordinator who handles public relations and media relations efforts for the district, as well as parent communications, website and social media updates. Our district is committed to keeping the community informed of initiatives and progress, and sharing our students' achievements. The establishment of a communications coordinator position was part of the 2001-2006 Strategic Plan.

There are two challenges in the area of school and community relations. The first is the size of the district. The district has 12 municipalities, many of which do not have a town center, so keeping all residents informed can be challenging. The geography of our district is much different from other school districts that consist of one municipality, one school district. We accept students from 11 different sending districts, which means we have students coming from small and large schools, students who have only been in one building from K-8 or multiple buildings, and all schools have different characteristics. The second challenge is the North VS. Voorhees mentality, instead of North AND Voorhees. Though the high schools are in the same school district, the perception still exists that one high school gets more than the other. The high school and district administrators have made strides in this area to establish equality between the high schools, from curriculum to facilities to staff professional development.

## **SUMMARY**

North Hunterdon-Voorhees is a high performing school district that continually strives to prepare its students for life after high school, whether it is to attend an Ivy League college, enter into the workforce or the military. We have a strong educational program that serves all students. As highlighted above, we are providing our students and staff with 21st century technology to improve instruction and learning. We also offer a vast array of opportunities for students to get involved outside the classroom through athletics and student clubs and activities. Over 70% of our student body participate in a sport and/or a co-curricular activity.

The constraints of the district's budget are an annual concern as we address rising costs, aging facilities, and a 2% cap on the local tax levy. The Board of Education has been fiscally prudent as it has not raised the local tax levy in the last three years and has very low debt. The passage of the referendum by voters in November 2016 has allowed the district to upgrade and renovate its facilities, from new windows and bleachers to HVAC upgrades to updating the libraries. We continue to focus on providing students with opportunities to succeed in safe and functional facilities.