



Creating a Strategic Plan for the Lower Township Elementary School District

Mission Statement

“Dedicated to academic excellence, Lower Township Elementary Schools will nurture and challenge all students in a safe and innovative learning community. By encouraging respect and responsibility, students become self-directed, passionate, lifelong learners who will reach their potential. We are dedicated to supporting all students in exceeding the NJ Student Learning Standards.”

Session 1

What are the Strengths and Challenges of the Lower Township Elementary School District?

On April 2, 2019, Lower Twp. Board of Education members, superintendent, staff, parents and community members, approximately 32 people, came together to initiate strategic planning for the district. The meeting was opened by Vice-President Pat Smith, followed by a “State of the Schools” report by Superintendent Jeff Samaniego. Facilitators Mary Walter and Jane Kershner, of New Jersey School Boards Association, were introduced, and Mary described the process of strategic planning, and led the discussion through the activity planned for Session 1.

Participants were seated in eight (8) random groups, ensuring a cross-section of participating stakeholders. Each group was asked to list the top ten strengths of the district, and then the top ten challenges that are facing Lower Twp. Elementary Schools. After approximately twenty (20) minutes, each group was asked to report out on its findings, to the large group.

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

Red Dot Group:

Strengths:

Small class size
Many programs
Good communication:
 Facebook
 Thursday folder
 Remind
Arts
Inclusive of students
Community Involvement
Staff supported
Staff going above and beyond
 To help struggling students

Challenges:

Socio-economic status
parent support
Neglect
need to prepare students for local
 employment/local industry
 for those not going to college
school lunch (farm to table)
Lack of mental health services

Black Dot Group:

Strengths:

Teachers
Supportive community
All day Pre-K
Hands-on administrators
School clubs, music, etc.
Teacher training
Scholarships for needy
Success track record
Parental involvement
Class size

Challenges:

51% free and reduced
declining funding
declining enrollment
lack of local opportunities
Drug use
retain in area
lack of diversity
“baggage” kids come with
parental involvement
class size

Dark Green Dot Group:

Strengths:

Stable staff
Strong roots with twp.
Community connection
 And involvement
Strong PTA
Security SAFE!
Choice students

Challenges:

Finances (lack of)
Socio-economic make-up
seasonal employment
separation/distance b/w buildings
choice/geography/southern location
Technology
51% free/reduced lunch

(dark green dot group continued)

Elementary academic progression
Class size
Spirit
Extra-curricular activities

declining enrollment
job opportunities year round
ACES

Light Green Dot Group:

Strengths:

Strong community
Safety
Student Activities/Programs
Curricular Programs
Pre-school program

Challenges:

Funding
Demographics
ACES
Geographic location
employment

Orange Dot Group:

Strengths:

Dedicated staff
Local citizens are now in the
LT educational system
And have a vested interest
In the schools
Progressive administration
Music program
Small classes

Challenges:

taxes for citizens
senior population w/ fixed income
too short a school day
finding time for volunteer programs
parent participation in district programs
Graduates leave area to find work out of
area
increase amount of students

Purple Dot Group:

Strengths:

Staff/administration
Involved in community
PTA
Advanced programs
Special Education
Afterschool activities
Field trips

Challenges:

parent involvement
fundraising
communication/interaction with staff
Funding
Seasonal population
ACES/mental health/behavioral
health needs

Dark Blue Dot Group:

Strengths:

Family atmosphere
Supportive administration and Staff
Safe learning environment

Challenges:

socio-economic factors
transition to secondary school (LCMR)
academic achievement
academic support at home

Light Blue Dot Group:

Strengths:

Faculty, staff & administration
Programs for children with Challenges
Family involvement nights
PTA support
Excellent but limited donations From community
Community involvement
Schools collaborate
Schools are secure
Transportation
Communication w/ parents
AP's and more

Challenges:

loss of funding
English language
broken homes/emotional fallout
funding and time support outside agencies & businesses
electronic distractions
shorter school day

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The second strategic planning session is scheduled for:

Tuesday, May 7, 2019
6:00—7:30 pm
Carl T. Mitnick School

During the May 7 meeting, we will create a shared vision together for the future of the Lower Township Elementary School District. We will talk about our aspirations and expectations for our students and district.

Please join us. Everyone is welcome!
Bring a friend!