

Watchung Borough Public Schools

Summary of Strategic Planning Meeting

October 17, 2017

On October 17, 2017, the Watchung 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 Watchung School District. The meeting began with a welcome and introductions by Board of Education President, Ellyn Margulies. Dr. Barbara Resko, Superintendent, presented an excellent overview of the current "state of the schools." Gwen Thornton, assisted by Kathy Helewa New Jersey School Boards representatives, reviewed the strategic planning process the group would be undertaking.

Forty participants then gathered in five randomly assigned groups to identify the strengths/achievements and challenges of the Watchung 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.

Curriculum and Instruction/Teaching and Learning

- Focus on social/emotional health-increase growth mindset - training and implementation
- Develop critical thinkers
- Balance technology with "real life" experiences for life/career skills; recognize when to "disconnect"
- Focus on character education and development, including mindfulness, emotional intelligence, responsible social communication, responsible life decisions, compassion, individual accountability and the knowledge that its ok to fail, that know when to ask for help,
- Develop confident, resilient, independent, inclusive, courageous students/leaders that foster collaboration and are willing to take chances when appropriate
- Focus on personalized education to enable students to achieve individual best
- Emphasis on global perspective
- Balance technology in all areas of school life/learning
- Expand problem based learning, real work experiences
- Build global, cultural awareness
- Peer leadership program
- Educate and empower differences
- Provide great choice of programs

Special Education

- Increase CST to accommodate changing special needs population
- Fully staffed CST and LDTC
- Communications increased between CST and teachers

Communication and Advocacy

- Increase transparency
- Expand communication of public meetings to the community
- Advocate for increase funding at the state and federal level to support public education in Watchung

Finance

- Prepare and plan ahead for increasing student population
- Keep abreast of changes that affordable housing may bring to the district
- Continue to provide a safe security environment for all students and staff

Note:

The above information was provided by Gwen Thornton, NJSBA Field Representative.