



Creating a Strategic Plan for the Denville Township School District

Mission Statement

To educate and empower all students to excel.

Session 1 of 3 - What are the Strengths and Challenges/Opportunities of the Denville Township School District?

On November 14, 2022 Denville Township administrators, staff, Board members, parents, students, and community members came together to initiate strategic planning. The first evening's topic focused on the strengths and challenges/opportunities of the Denville Township School District to help inform the question of where the district is now.

The meeting began with welcoming remarks by Michael Andersen, President of the Board of Education. Dr. Steven Forte, Superintendent, and Dr. Sandra Cullis, Assistant Superintendent, provided an informative overview of the district. Charlene Peterson, from New Jersey School Boards Association, introduced the strategic planning process, and her colleague Matt Lee assisted throughout the small and large group work.

The participants gathered into ten mixed stakeholder groups to brainstorm the strengths and challenges/opportunities of the Denville Township School District. After discussion, each group came to a consensus on up to the top 10 strengths and top 10 challenges/opportunities and presented those to the full group of meeting participants.

The information that follows is a summary of the work of the small groups. All consensus points may be posted on the district's website.

Work of the Small Groups:

Table 1	
STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES/OPPORTUNITIES
Communication awards/professional development, character development	↑ Academic standing
Safety & security	Preserve ↓ Class sizes
Respect between staff and students	Safety & security
Student-centered learning	Opportunity to build peer relationships within school community
Students feel happy at school	Increase Special Services support staff and related service professionals
Extracurricular offerings	Increase supports for Math, specifically language-laden Math
	Locate space for ↑ class sizes
	Increase student-centered learning by continuing to fund opportunities. More peer-to-peer tutors/mentors

Table 2	
STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES/OPPORTUNITIES
High school programs in VV	Technology balance
1:1 technology	Ensuring right supports remain for students
Tiered systems of support	Striking balance of info to students
Security	Security changes over time
Quality of SRO/Class III Officer	Class sizes
Quality of staff	Civic engagement/Volunteerism
Economies of scale for projects	Physical space challenges
Social-emotional learning	Non-traditional partners
	Sustainability
	Outdoor education spaces

Table 3	
STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES/OPPORTUNITIES
Increased mental health focus	Special Education – increasing needs
Student leadership & SEL	Early bus timing (VV) – lack of appropriate sleep hours, safe bus stops
Class size	Class size growth: equality across the district (LV/RV), student/teacher ratio
Strong teacher retention	VV Music Department – build in chorus, band, orchestra into the school day
Strong administration leadership	Increasing math aptitude – meeting or exceeding math standards, “Math Nights” – parental support
Community support/parents	Space concerns – keep class sizes small. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Larger classes can be a safety issue.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning issue • Redistrict
Communication (all parties)	
Academics/offerings	
Covid/Crisis management	
Active PTAs	
Great staff 😊	

Table 4	
STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES/OPPORTUNITIES
SEL teams – inviting parents in to discuss wellness	“multi-intelligences”
Successful benchmarks	Enforce real world life skills: communication skills, financial literacy, nutrition/wellness, jobs of the future
Security	Community involvement – family involvement, events/programs
Communication with families	Enforce student resilience – parent/student/staff/awareness
Student leadership – creating assemblies, peer mentors, asking for programs	

Table 5	
STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES/OPPORTUNITIES
SEL	SEL – (Mental Health res.)
Staff are flexible/adaptable	Physical space (class size)
Staff puts in 101%	LV/RV disparity
Recognizing and celebrating diversity	Attracting/retaining diverse staff
Academic supports/options	Arts availability during school day
	Sustainability LV/RV (similar to VV)
	Increase in population

Table 6	
STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES/OPPORTUNITIES
Safety & Security (Physically and emotionally)	Rising enrollment
Professional development & resources for staff (inclusive schools, related services, TSS)	Continuing to promote inclusive schools (PD, folding it into the curriculum, continue to reflect diversity in materials)
Individualized attention to students	More robust Arts program
Sense of community	Age of facilities
Athletic program	Diversity of staff
Staff retention	More needs (i.e., Special Services)

Table 7	
STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES/OPPORTUNITIES
Positive community	Opportunity for more outreach post-Covid
Support from <u>all</u>	Increased enrollment – how to maintain small class sizes
Common goal – child-centric	Transition to middle school
Small class sizes	Streamline communication across one platform
Relationship with parents/families/teachers/ community	Tackle and close Math gaps
Strong ELA growth	Maintaining staff
DALA program – systems & programs for extra support, tutors	Growing Social-Emotional Learning Curriculum – build from elementary to middle
Co-teach model	
Social Emotional Learning focus	

Table 8	
STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES/OPPORTUNITIES
Security – 911 inform app, vestibules, police officers available	Security – drills at unexpected times, e.g., recess, while in restrooms, outside, lunch, etc.
Technology – 1:1 devices	Cybersecurity – MFA for all our systems? Google authentication?
SEL growth – advisory sessions are beneficial	<u>Life skills</u> needed across more grade bands
Student population growth	Invest in teachers – funding for teachers to increase education, more full-time teachers (part-time seems ineffective)
Community “feel” across the entire district	Increased related arts - Music

Table 9	
STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES/OPPORTUNITIES
Physical school security	Feeling safe at school – emotionally among peers
Instruction/academics	Space for future to maintain class sizes
Class size	Upscaling professional development for teachers and staff for consistent use in classroom
Teacher resources	World Language options elementary, VV – district-wide – up the frequency
Upgrade of technology, e.g., Smartboards	Music – vocal & instrumental – lessons as an elective. More music throughout day.
Enrichment programs	Bring more parents out into schools
Teacher accessibility	Look into later start times for schools
Community oriented – child centric	More affordable options for before/after care
New teacher support – in general support	
Teachers care about delivery of curriculum	

Table 10	
STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES/OPPORTUNITIES
Awards	Building space/student ratio
Community/welcoming	Mental Health
Leadership	Math & critical thinking
Security	Technology balance
Technology	Learning loss due to Covid
Quality Educators	Security
Vision of where the district wants to go	Civics/Democratic process
ELA Program (units of study)	Clinical staff to student ratio
Private Education foundation	
Character Ed. Program	
Sensory room	

The second strategic planning session is scheduled for: Monday, November 28 from 7:30 – 9:00 pm. During the November 28th meeting, using a similar brainstorming process, we will identify our visions for the Denville Township School District five years from now. The final meeting will be held on Monday, December 12 at 7:30 pm to write goal statements using the input from the two previous sessions.

Please join us. Everyone is welcome, even if you were not able to attend the first meeting. We look forward to seeing you!