



The Paterson Public School District Is Creating a New Five-Year Strategic Plan

The 3D Strategic Planning Process: Dream, Determination, and Destiny by Design

Session 1: What Are the Strengths, Achievements, and Challenges of the Paterson Public School District?

On the evening of **March 14, 2019**, a cross-section of our stakeholders--community members, parents, educators, and school district Administrators--came together at Eastside High School to initiate strategic planning. Over the course of three meetings, our work will focus on both the realities of, and our visions for, the school district in order to form a new Strategic Plan that shall guide the district for the next five years. The first evening's topic was focused on the current strengths and achievements of, and challenges and opportunities facing, Paterson Public Schools and the community of Paterson.

We began the process with a comprehensive overview of the school district as presented by Superintendent of Schools Eileen F. Shafer. The reason for and the methodology of creating a new Strategic Plan were presented to the participants by Ms. Helewa of NJSBA.

We then split into nine different small groups to identify the strengths and points of pride of our school district and community, and to brainstorm what opportunities and challenges we face in the future. After group discussion, each small group identified to the larger group its "Top 10" (or thereabouts) list of strengths and challenges. Underlying all of our work is the District's Mission and Vision Statement, which were a focal point of the evening's presentations and distributed to all participants.

The information that follows on the following pages is the work of the small groups. As discussed with the participants, all meeting outcomes will be recorded and used at future meetings to inform the final work in preparing the District's new Strategic Plan.



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Group #1

Strengths/Accomplishments

- Superintendent is collaborative with all stakeholders
- Comprehensive curriculum
- PARCC scores are improving
- After school programs
- Dedicated teaching Staff
- Uniform policy
- Students are eager to be challenged
- Diverse Population
- School culture and climate

Challenges

- Before and after school programs are needed
- Money paid out to charter schools
- Need more vocational schools
- Large class sizes
- Children are not reading at grade level
- School buildings are old
- Transient population
- Parental involvement
- More parental workshops
- Absentee rate

Group #2

Strengths/Accomplishments

- Graduation rate
- Attendance rate
- Afterschool program
- Parent portal
- Improved school lunch

Challenges

- Teacher / parent communication
- Parental involvement
- Poor facilities
- Art & Music
- S.A.C.s
- MORE extra-curricular activities
- Instructional challenge
- Too many substitutes



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Group #3

Strengths/Accomplishments

- PSA communications are excellent
- Community engagement is good
- Good Administration
- Strong school activities
- Pre-K is important
- Reading Specialists
- In-school suspension

Challenges

- Lack of diversity of teachers – educators – Administration
- Discipline problems in the schools need to be addressed
- Make sure students have differentiation in instruction
- STEM

Group #4

Strengths/Accomplishments

- Good preschool program (full day)
- Follow curriculum (preschool)
- District has regained control!!!
- Parents have more access to internet portal
- More communication with teachers
- Sign-in sheet w/high school student (daily for parent)
- Breakfast program

Challenges

- Before care
- Grammar school sign in sheets with the teachers
- Planner (grammar school and elementary)
- More support / counseling
- More afterschool programs (not just for testing) helping with homework
- Challenging of funding for charter schools
- Language barrier

Group #5

Strengths/Accomplishments

- Diversity
- Dedicated and resilient staff
- Central Office is open to new ideas!
- Empathetic staff
- Tolerance between students
- Positive energy in schools
- Huge growth potential in schools
- Strong professional development
- Community partnership / Academic partnership



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Group #5, continued

Challenges

- Inability to retain staff
- Staff burnout
- Budget cuts affect Arts
- Need for before- and after-care
- Comparable salary guide
- Parental develop / involvement
- Parental meetings
- Facility upgrades
- Control violence in the community
- Overcrowded schools
- Lack of resources

Group #6

Strengths/Accomplishments

- Diversity
- New school buildings
- Scholarship programs

Challenges

- Lack of mutual respect between teachers & students
- [Anti-] Bullying programs – teachers should be aware of bullying and see the signs.
- Heating and air conditioning improvement
- Unfair punishment by the teacher to the entire class because of behavior of one bad student

Group #7

Strengths/Accomplishments

- Community diversity
- Superintendent that understands the community
- Early childhood programs
- Staff (custodians, secretaries, teachers, Child Study Team, Admins, Instructional Specialists)
- Students ready to learn

Challenges

- Funding
- Lack of interventions
- Class size
- Facilities
- Each school does not have equitable distribution of services
- Parental advocacy training



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Group #8

Strengths/Accomplishments

- Sports
- Dedicated staffs
- Delicious food by the culinary students
- District effort is commendable

Challenges

- Interactions with teachers and students
- Sharing best practices
- Lack of communication between students and staff
- Communicate between departments to address or solve student academic deficiencies
- Students promoted to the next level when they are not prepared
- More recreation

Group #9

Strengths/Accomplishments

- Community partnerships
- Dedicated staff/ good retention of staff
- Literary initiatives
- Meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner
- Curriculum consistent across schools
- Full-service community schools
- Attention to HIB
- More students going to college & scores going up
- Attendance is improving
- Ms. Shafer is doing great community outreach
- Working on technology

Challenges

- Special education
- Child study team has no compromise or negotiation
(don't explain the purpose of the 15 days)
- Facilities (old)
- Class sizes too large
- Budget deficit
- Losing our kids to charters
- No afterschool or recreation activities for special needs kids
- Staff (some) resistant to change
- Internet crashes a lot!

(End of small group work, recap continues on the following page)



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After sharing our small groups' results with all the entire group, gratitude was expressed to the Board of Education and Superintendent Shafer for making this initiative possible, Administration for all its efforts in ensuring a successful evening, and to all participants for their wide-ranging contributions and collaborative work.

Our next meeting is set for **Tuesday, April 9, at 6pm** at the **John F. Kennedy Educational Complex**. Check will begin at **5:30pm**. We will engage in a **Visioning Activity** to help refine our collective vision for Paterson Public Schools, which promises to be a truly **fun** exercise! We strongly encourage all to **bring a friend** to our next meeting. New participants from all facets of the community are welcome at all three Strategic Planning meetings. **Free childcare will be provided and complimentary dinner will be served** at all Strategic Planning meetings.

The Commissioners of the Paterson Board of Education and Superintendent Shafer greatly appreciate your highly interactive participation in helping to help create a roadmap for our public school district for the next five years—by Paterson, for Paterson. We look forward to working with you at our future sessions!

We look forward to seeing you for our next Strategic Planning meeting, April 9, at 6pm in the John F. Kennedy Educational Complex, and on May 16 at School 25. Bring a friend!



Our Mission:

To prepare each student for success in the college/university of their choosing and in their chosen career

Our Vision:

To be the leader in educating New Jersey's urban youth



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