



Creating a Strategic Plan for the the Upper Township School District

Mission Statement

To prepare all learners for 21st Century challenges via comprehensive curricular and instructional programs, aligned with New Jersey Student Learning Standards, and to create an academic infrastructure which fosters and nurtures a love of learning; enabling each stakeholder to actualize his/her individual potential.

Session 2

Developing a Vision for the Upper Township School District

On February 21, 2024, Upper Township School District administrators, Board of Education members, staff, parents, and community members, a total of twenty (20), came together for the second strategic planning meeting. The topic for the second meeting focused on developing a vision and initiatives for the Upper Township School District. The meeting began with a welcome and introduction by Superintendent Ms. Allison Pessolano. Facilitator Michelle Kennedy, from the New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA), was introduced and provided an overview of the strategic planning process and the focus of the evening's activity.

We reviewed the consensus process utilized in strategic planning. Participants watched a video that allowed them to think about the future we are preparing our students for, and the skills needed for future success. We then envisioned the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) selecting the Upper Township School District as the model district for success in advancing student achievement. The task is to produce a Podcast sharing the success of Upper Township School District, which will broadcast throughout NJ and globally as part of the NJDOE roadmap to success in education. The Podcast is to talk about what made it possible for the Upper Township School District to become the model district for success in advancing student achievement - What does the Upper Township School District's desired future look like in 3-5 years from now, where everyone is succeeding, and there are no barriers?

The participants were encouraged to think about the big picture, with money not being a concern and no restrictions. Participants gathered in three (3) self-assigned groups to produce their Podcast, which included the name of the Podcast and highlights of what was taking place to achieve success at Upper Township School District. The small groups reviewed the outcomes from meeting #1, strengths and challenges, and then began brainstorming on their vision for the district. After group discussions, each group identified their consensus points and presented them to all meeting participants.

The following information 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 website to share the group work during the strategic planning process.

Small Group Work – Visions Highlights of forward thinking to 3-5 years, Podcast Names, and identified Goal Areas:

Podcast Name: Time Out

Highlights:

- Curriculum that focuses on academic achievement.
- Focus on Early Childhood Education.
- Collaboration among BOE, Admin, Teachers, Community all goals and initiatives.
- Increased Focus on hiring, developing, and maintaining exceptional high-quality teaching staff.
- Well-rounded educational experiences that include academic, athletic, artistic, social, and emotional development for our students.
- Supports for our students social and emotional health and well-being.
- Adapting with educational technology as it evolves and changes over time.
- Commitment to Capital Improvements to our physical plant.
- Family Engagement for students of all academic ability levels.

Podcast Name: UTSD: Unveiling Tomorrows Scholars

Highlights:

- Investing in and being respectful of staff (Value being displayed via competitive salary and benefits, meaningful, requested, and relevant professional development).
- Small class sizes and instructional support for all learners. Including resources that meet the needs and accommodations for our students.
- Providing students with a well-rounded, robust experience in the arts & humanities, as well as the core subjects (Including, but not limited to year long art class, music class, library, stem, and world languages).
- High student achievement is determined through multiple measures for all students- more project based and student driven learning.
- Community and family-oriented experiences- making families feel more connected and allowing students to feel more connected to their community.
- Collaborative learning experiences- more activities and experiences between grade levels and across schools as well as interactions with other schools.
- Mentoring programs- older and younger student collaborations including bridging the gap with our sending district high school.
- A wellness department to address the social/emotional needs of our staff and students- a Zen Den- more learning spaces in the building.
- Extra-curriculars that meet the needs and demands of all kids: Sports, Arts, Technology.
- Strong early childhood program available to ALL kids.

Podcast Name: What's Up?

Highlights:

- Invested in attracting and retaining the highest achieving staff.
- Created Mental health hubs within our school providing services to family & community during and outside school hours.
- Fostered community relationships bring experts into the classroom, bringing learning to life.
- Developed a love of learning and critical thinking skills in our students through experiential, cross curricular, thematic learning.
- Transparent & effective communication throughout the community.
- Schools became community centers.
- Though outside the box and broke free of traditional thinking.

Four goal areas emerged from the common themes identified by the group at large.

1. Student Experiences
2. Health and Wellness
3. Public Relationships
4. School Culture and Climate

The third strategic planning session is scheduled for:

**Wednesday, March 20, 2024, at 6:30 pm
Upper Township Middle School Library**

Meetings are scheduled for 1.5 hours. Meetings start and end promptly.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed their time, talent, and perspectives during the first and second Strategic Planning meetings. We appreciate your participation!

During the March 20th meeting, participants will review the outcomes from meetings 1 & 2 (strengths & challenges, vision & initiatives). We will use the four (4) goal areas identified at meeting 2 to start the roadmap to write an overarching goal statement per each goal area and 4-5 accompanying objectives to support that goal statement.

Attendees will have the opportunity to self-select a goal area in which they would like to participate!

Please join us. Bring a friend! Everyone is welcome! We look forward to seeing you!

Please RSVP by visiting the districts website
<https://www.upperschools.org/domain/410>

*Thank you!
. Walk-ins are welcome!*