



# New Jersey School Boards Association

*Celebrating 100 years of service*

413 West State Street • Trenton, NJ 08618 • Telephone: 609.695.7600 • Toll-Free: 888.88NJSBA • Fax: 609.695.0413



## UPPER SADDLE RIVER

# Creating a Strategic Plan For Upper Saddle River School District

## Mission Statement

"The mission of the Upper Saddle River School District is to develop in each student, intellectual, artistic, physical, and practical skills and knowledge; to allow each of them to have a strong sense of achievement and pride; to develop a life long love of learning; and to work well independently and as part of a team.

It is the expectation of this school district that all students achieve the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards at all grade levels."

## Meeting # 1

### What Are the Strengths, Achievements, and Challenges of the Upper Saddle River School District?

On February 27, 2013, Upper Saddle River School District Administration, Board of Education Members, staff, parents and community members came together to initiate strategic planning. The evening topic was focused on the strengths, achievements, and challenges of the Upper Saddle River School District. The meeting began with a welcome and introduction by Board President, **Ms. Catherine Smiechowski**. Superintendent, **Dr. Monica Browne** presented the current "State of the Schools." NJSBA Field Services Representatives, **Al Annunziata** and **Robynn Meehan** discussed an introduction to strategic planning. 46 participant stakeholders then gathered in randomly assigned groups to identify the strengths and challenges of the Upper Saddle River School District.

Small groups of participants brainstormed and shared ideas together. After discussion, each group identified their consensus points 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 web to share the group work during the course of the strategic planning process.

## **Group Consensus**

### **Strengths, Accomplishments, Points of Pride and Challenges**

#### **Red Team:**

##### **Strengths-**

- Technology
- Professional development
- Staff and parent commitment
- Community involvement
- Programming
- Curriculum
- Security
- Planning and preparation
- Flexibility
- Value of education

##### **Challenges-**

- Traffic
- Pressure of achievements
- School mandates
- Time
- Enrollment

**Green Team:**

**Strengths-**

- Caring teachers
- Supportive parents
- Opportunities for students- sports, art, music...
- Facilities
- Safety
- Respect and parent input
- BOE transparency
- Technology
- PTO/USREF
- Respect for diversity
- Campus environment
- Philanthropic/community service
- Responsive

**Challenges-**

- Keeping up with technology
- Unfunded mandates
- Tap into creativity
- Connection to the community for out of district students
- Common cores standards
- Testing-PARCC
- Special education placement
- Health care benefits

**Blue Team:**

**Strengths-**

- Quality & dedication of staff
- Professional Development
- Student/staff achievement
- Community support
- Two-way communication
- Willingness to change
- Student opportunities (clubs and academics)
- Content (generate content/curriculum, foundation grants)
- Facilities, Security, proximity to services
- Leadership and Directionality—recognized outside of the community

**Challenges-**

- Enrollment trends
- Budget/funding
- Structure of the Quad-moving forward with enrollment
- Special Education achievement
- Maintaining and improving achievement
- Transitions-school to school
- State mandates and challenges
- Testing pressures
- External factors
- Communicating the strengths to the parents/community

**Yellow Team:**

**Strengths-**

- Responsive to changes and needs (rapid response)
- Fiscally responsible
- Parent involvement
- Proximity to community services (strong relationship)
- Environmentally friendly
- Collaboration among organizations
- Technology (iPads, smart boards etc..)
- High academic achievement
- Well-maintained, updated facilities
- Safety and security
- Caring community
- Good class size
- Special services/support-meeting the needs of all learners

**Challenges-**

- Enrollment forecast lower, increased cost?
- State mandates
- Lack of funding from state aid
- Risk of eliminating valuable programs?
- Calendar-consistency (in quad district)
- Effective communication with community
- Members-voters being informed (especially those without children in the district)
- More foreign language choices in lower grades
- PARCC readiness

**Orange Team:**

**Strengths-**

- Fund capital projects over time
- Community involvement
- Jr. Kindergarten Full day Kindergarten
- Programs/extra-curricular available
- Parent involvement
- School is valued by children/parents
- Ahead of the learning curve
- High expectations
- Open communication
- Police department relationship

**Challenges-**

- Competitive/high achievers- want balance
- Pressure- K-8
- Balance and expectations-schedules
- Opportunities for socialization
- Recess-no time
- Keeping up-little kids feeling the pressure to keep up
- Amount of homework
- Over involvement in activities
- Developmental expectation at lower grade
- Keeping up with technology-
- Managing and monitoring the technology-keeping staff ahead of students

**The second strategic planning session is scheduled for:**

**Thursday, March 27 at 7:00pm at Cavallini Middle School Media Center.**

Meetings are scheduled for 1.5 hours and end promptly to respect our participants' time.

During the next meeting we will create a **shared vision together** for the future of Upper Saddle River School District... we will talk about our aspirations and expectations for our students and school district.

Please join us!

RSVP by contacting the district office, **Ms. Sandy Kreger** at **201-961-6502** .

We look forward to seeing you!