



# New Jersey School Boards Association

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## Creating a Strategic Plan for the West Orange Public Schools

### District Mission Statement

The mission of the West Orange Public Schools is to engage in an energetic partnership with all components of this culturally-diverse community, to marshal resources to assist all students to reach their full potential through an academic emphasis on the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards, to promote the highest quality intellectual and human relations development of our pupils, and to instill in all students the knowledge and decision-making skills essential to make appropriate choices and successfully meet the challenges they will encounter as productive members of society.

### Session 2 of 3

#### Developing a Vision for the West Orange Public Schools in the Next 5 Years

On December 3, 2015 West Orange Public Schools staff, parents, a student and community members came together to continue the strategic planning process. The second meeting's topic focused on creating a shared vision for the West Orange Public Schools in the next five years.

Participants were greeted by Superintendent Jeff Rutzky, and were officially welcomed by Mark Robertson, Vice-President of the Board of Education. The meeting, facilitated by Charlene Peterson and Al Annunziata from New Jersey School Boards Association, began with an overview of the Strategic Planning process and the steps taken at the November 2, 2015 meeting.

To begin the visioning process, participants were asked to picture themselves away from the district for 5 years, and returning to find West Orange Public Schools on the cover of TIME magazine, with the caption "Schools that Succeed." The participants were asked to envision what was written in the magazine article that warranted such high recognition – what programs / services / curriculum / student outcomes / best practices / facilities would you expect to see in your schools that are succeeding? 21<sup>st</sup> century skills were highlighted in a video clip.

Approximately 40 participants then gathered in five randomly assigned groups to brainstorm their visions of how the district achieved this remarkable success. Each group's outcomes were shared with all meeting participants. The session concluded with the identification of common threads throughout the groups' work and five broad goal areas for the next meeting.

## ***West Orange Public Schools Strategic Planning Meeting #2 Outcomes***

### **Group Work**

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 group work during the course of the strategic planning process.

### **Blue Dot Group: Strength in our Differences**

<b>Vision - Initiatives</b>	<b>Vision - Initiatives</b>
Expand opportunities for <u>ALL</u> students to visit colleges.	Increase the value of social development through play and active engagement, as opposed to paper and pencil-seated tasks.
Increase awareness for students to participate in activities and programs at colleges.	Lower student-to-teacher ratio.
Tap into parent career networks to expose students to different career paths.	Less homework at elementary levels
Develop vocational programs for students as an alternative to college.	Building and facilities should be updated to support academics
Increase frequency of contact between students and Guidance Counselors, in addition to consistency of input and contact between students and Guidance Counselors	Technology in the hands of every student.
Open requirements to take AP and Honors classes AND a strict standard that has to be maintained (i.e. B and up). <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Have a class established into which students can transfer when they do not maintain the required grade.</li></ul>	Offer support to ALL sports played in town and at the high school. Don't focus only on the football team.

### **Yellow Dot Group: Breaking Barriers through Creativity**

<b>Vision - Initiatives</b>	<b>Vision - Initiatives</b>
Using technology to interact with students all over the country and world (virtual classroom)	More time to younger children to play/better facilities at elementary schools.
At least one more building and sufficient space for all students and teachers.	No PARCC
Hands-on learning; skills based	More community engagement, especially parents and including non-English speakers.
Have 1 high school, not 2. All students accepted equally.	

### **Red Dot Group: Holistic, Adaptive, Dynamic**

<b>Vision - Initiatives</b>	<b>Vision - Initiatives</b>
Computer literacy for all students	Improved food service – fresh foods – chef (farm to table)
Standing desks	Survival skills/life skills
Guidance (H.S.) physical space – student-friendly, interactive	Career awareness - options
Guidance department – revamp: training, specialization, curriculum	Individualized approach to student education
Strong Language Arts program (no teaching to test)	Less standardized testing.
Middle School efficacy	Field trips, assemblies, hands-on experiences.
Sound communication ability (including new medium)	Strong parental involvement
Technology education & space for these subjects.	Later start time

### **Black Dot Group: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning**

<b>Vision - Initiatives</b>	<b>Vision - Initiatives</b>
Strong public PreK program	Team-oriented classroom. Let teachers be more creative in the classroom
Update the physical aspects of the classrooms to 21 <sup>st</sup> century learning (upgrading electrical outlets, water, HVAC & heating, capital upgrades. Physical layout of classrooms)	Much more communication with parents. Needs to be more inclusive environment.
Encourage Entrepreneurship <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nurture gifts identified in children</li> <li>• Matching careers to these gifts</li> </ul>	Restructure school days More block scheduling of creative art/Phys. Ed.

### **Green Dot Group: Nurturing the Joy of Learning**

<b>Vision - Initiatives</b>	<b>Vision - Initiatives</b>
Mission: A project-based district that is student centric that supports inquiry and exploration-based learning using all available tools including technology (cloud-based) and other hands-on material.	Drivers to meet the 4 C's – collaborator, creator, critical thinker, communicator. <b>Intrinsic motivation:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joy</li> <li>• Enthusiasm</li> <li>• Curiosity or wonder</li> <li>• Resilience</li> <li>• Resourcefulness</li> </ul>
Other Core Values: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small class sizes (15 – 20). TA if more</li> <li>• More activity time and space</li> </ul>	Our expectations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Global citizen</li> <li>• Self-motivated</li> </ul>

## ***West Orange Public Schools Strategic Planning Meeting #2 Outcomes***

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• STEAM opportunities</li><li>• Systems to make sure all students are valued.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hard working</li><li>• Problem solver</li><li>• Flexible</li><li>• Well rounded</li><li>• Not driven by Standardized test.</li></ul>
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### **Common Threads**

After the individual groups reported their visions, the following common threads were identified that connected all of the groups' work.

- Hands-on, student-centered learning
- Facilities and environment to support 21<sup>st</sup> century learning – food, space, furniture, recess, climate, etc.
- Expanded parent and community engagement
- Create a culture of self-motivation, creativity, teamwork, and joy in learning
- Less focus on standardized testing and allow for creative, individualized learning
- Increased career counseling and access to college preparation
- Life and social skills
- Use of technology to expand learning opportunities
- Celebrate diversity

### **Broad Goal Areas:**

Five goal areas emerged from the common themes identified by the group at large:

- Facilities and Program Accessibility
- 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning and Readiness for Future Success
- Student Success
- Holistic Health and Wellness
- Parent and Community Engagement

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

**Tuesday, January 26, 2016**  
**7:00 – 8:30 pm at West Orange High School (Tarnoff Cafeteria)**

During the January 26th meeting we will review the outcomes from Sessions 1 & 2 (Strengths & Challenges, Visions) and develop broad goal statements for each goal area that emerged from Session 2, and related objectives for each goal area.

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