



## **Creating a Strategic Plan for the Somerset Hills Regional School District**

### **Mission Statement**

The mission of The Somerset Hills School District is to provide an authentic and balanced learning experience for each student by harnessing the power of innovation and an engaged community to create thoughtful and impactful global citizens.

### **Session 1**

#### **What are the Strengths, Achievements and Challenges of the Somerset Hills Regional School District School District?**

On October 20, 2021, Somerset Hills School District administrators, Board of Education members, staff, parents, and community members, fifty (50) in all, came together to initiate strategic planning. The first evening focused on the strengths, achievements, and challenges of the Somerset Hills Regional School District. The meeting began with a welcome and introduction by Board President, Ms. Heather Santoro. Dr. Gretchen Dempsey, Superintendent, presented the current “State of the Schools” report. Facilitator Gwen Thornton, from New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA), was introduced and provided an introduction to the strategic planning process.

We reviewed the consensus process utilized in strategic planning. The topic for the evening focused on identifying district strengths and challenges. Participants gathered in randomly assigned groups, six (6) groups in total, and engaged in brainstorming the districts strengths and challenges. After group discussion, each group identified their consensus points, “Top 10” strengths and challenges. The outcomes were presented to the large group. The common themes that emerged are posted in this report.

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 website to share the group work during the course of the strategic planning process.

## Group Consensus: Strengths, Achievements & Challenges

### Room B302

Strengths	Challenges
Talented staff	Technology infrastructure
Committed families and community	Funding
Technology advances	Need of ESL community
Facilities/security	Workload balance
Diverse student body	Preparation for 21 <sup>st</sup> Century careers – curriculum, experiences
Strong curriculum/standards	Outreach to general community
Committed to whole student/wellness	School ratings
Co-curricular activities	Sending district relationships
Graduation rate	

### Room B303

Strengths	Challenges
Orientation & integration	Basic conversational Spanish (staff)
Anti-bullying management ↔	Bullying
Personalized instruction ↔	Beyond tech
Media Room	More music days in MS
Ability to pivot	Delivery of language instruction
Music program	
History dept.	
Sports – “no cut”, “minor” sports	

### Room B304

Strengths	Challenges
Involved parents	Declining enrollment
BHS amazing courses	Update curriculum
Caring staff – great communication	Teach life-skills
Great extra-curricular activities	Career oriented courses
Capacity of staff and facilities	Bedwell movement
BMS BHS facilities	Reasonable class sizes
School spirit	Outreach to more students
Focus on kindness	Enhanced tech offerings
Focus on community service	BES facilities updating
Support from community	

**Somerset Hills Regional District Strategic Planning Meeting #1 Outcomes**

**Room B305**

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Challenges</b>
Balance academics/developmental activities	More of that balance
Community involvement/support (board, staff, district) did what needed to be done	More community unity and collaboration
Improved recess outlets at Middle School	Incremental transition from 4 – 9
Inclusion of students in clubs/sports at HS	More guidance/direct instruction studying for classes at difficult levels
Willingness and openness	Different way to stream from MS honors to HS honors
Transparency due to size	Increase parent communication (can seem “iffy”)
Faculty	Transition Bedminster/new students to district
	Google classroom/PowerSchool notifications sent to students at MS
	Overload of information for students
	Coordinating curricula between SHSD and Bedminster

**Room B306**

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Challenges</b>
ELL outreach strong lower grades	ELL family engagement HS
Guidance dept. support beyond college	Declining enrollment (staffing, funding, programming)
Teacher availability and support for SEL and issues	Tiered intervention for all students
Graduation rates → college acceptance/attendance	Rankings: public perception; varied platforms
AP courses (#)	Regionalization (pressure to)
Wellness Initiatives ↔	Teaching students how to manage stress, anger – self-knowledge, mental health
Athletics	Diversity in staff

**Somerset Hills Regional District Strategic Planning Meeting #1 Outcomes**

**Room C302**

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Challenges</b>
Engaged community	Fostering sense of belonging and community to students/family (of existing and new)
Committed, hard-working staff	Limited opportunities to expose students to diverse experiences how to integrate core curriculum standards learning with creativity and individualized instruction
Chance for each student to excel in particular area of strength/interest	Increasing polarized political environment
Outdoor learning environments	Coordinate skills/curriculum students from BMS and Bedminster come to BHS with
Strong character education/peer leadership programs	Making sure BHS students are aware of all post HS opportunities and their requirements and programs available during HS
	Balance between technology and activity-based learning especially in BMS and BHS

Following each group's posting on their consensus points, the following **common themes** emerged:

- Talented faculty and staff
- Committed families and community
- Strong co-curricular and sports programs
- SEL; health and wellness, character education
- Strong curriculum; AP program
- Needs of ESL community/delivery of language instruction
- Life skills, CTE opportunities
- Transitions between buildings/grade levels/for new students
- Balancing technology /enhanced tech offerings
- More community collaboration and outreach
- Facilities upgrades to BES
- Funding and Enrollment

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

**Thursday, November 11, 2021, at 7:00 pm,**

**Sign-in begins at 6:30 pm.**

Meetings start and end promptly.

***Somerset Hills Regional District Strategic Planning Meeting #1 Outcomes***

During the November 11<sup>th</sup> meeting we will create a shared vision together for the future of the Somerset Hills Regional School District . . . we will talk about our aspirations and expectations for our students and school district.

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

**Please RSVP by responding to the Google invitation!**