



Hamburg Board of Education

Strategic Planning Update #2

Outcomes of the Second Community Strategic Planning Session

At the invitation of Superintendent Dr. Kimberly Sigman and the Hamburg Board of Education, members of the Hamburg School community came together on the evening of September 26 for the second meeting of school district Strategic Planning. Our core group, which is open to all interested participants from the community, included school administrators, teachers, educational professionals, parents, board members, and two representatives from the Borough government, including the Mayor. Educational leadership consultant Ms. Kathleen Helewa facilitated the meeting.

We began the session with a recap of our first meeting, in which we examined and discussed the state of the district from everyone's unique perspectives. Having completed SWOT analyses during the first meeting, we noted the common themes that emerged: **Strengths** being staff, communications, the educational program (notably arts and student supports including RTI, OT, and PT), course selection, and an increase in test scores; **Weaknesses** being lower than desired parental engagement, a need to sharpen interpersonal skills, a wish to celebrate students more frequently, and for a more inclusive website; **Opportunities** exist to connect with the community, including small businesses and sports, in order to foster relationships that benefit our students; and **Threats** commonly identified included funding, charter school enrollment, and standardized testing ("teaching to the test", testing dates).

The focus for our session this evening was on defining a vision for our students. For guidance, we dove into the District's Mission Statement and Core Beliefs. We began with the Hamburg School District's Mission Statement:

The mission of the Hamburg Public School District is to provide an education, which will enable students to acquire the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to become contributing members of society.

The educational program will enable each student to develop emotionally, socially, psychologically, and cognitively within his or her abilities and interests.

The mission of the Hamburg Public School District, therefore, is to develop an educational program that is under constant evaluation, allows all students to achieve New Jersey Student Learning Standards at all grade levels, and is dedicated to providing experiences relative to the demands of modern society in an effort to best prepare our students for success and grand achievements in the 21st century.

The Mission Statement generated much conversation. It was enacted sometime during the prior Superintendent's administration, and is read at every Hamburg Board of Education meeting and

Learners Today, Leaders Tomorrow!



is hung on the walls of the classrooms. It has not been re-visited in some years, and none present were aware of the exact degree of student involvement in its crafting. All agreed that the goals laid out in the current Mission Statement are laudable and the school should strive to attain them. But the language seemed outdated to the group, and too adult-centric. All present agreed that student voices should be reflected in the Mission Statement. All agreed that a refresh of the Mission Statement, involving students in the process, would be optimal. It was noted that the outcomes of our strategic planning process will be greatly valuable for such an endeavor.

The Core Beliefs of the Hamburg School are the values by which the school district is governed, and the guiding principles which define and create our school culture. They are delineated in the Hamburg School's Belief Statements, which resonated with the group.

Belief Statements

- We believe in the worth and dignity of each person.
- We believe that all students are entitled to the opportunity to maximize their talents and abilities.
- We believe that students thrive in a learning environment that facilitates self-discovery, exploration, and intellectual risk-taking.
- We believe that a quality education is a life-long process that fosters academic and cultural understanding.
- We believe that an effective education is a shared responsibility by all students, parents, educators, and organizations within our community.
- We believe that we have the obligation to nurture a culture of respect that honors the uniqueness of the individual and fosters responsibility toward the community and the environment.
- We believe that an effective educational system anticipates, plans, and acts in response to a changing world.

Keeping in mind the Belief Statements and the Mission Statement and surrounding discussion, participants were then asked to refine a vision for the future of the Hamburg School District. We considered the scenario in which the new Strategic Plan had matured, and all of the objectives of the Plan had been accomplished. What would the Hamburg student experience look like as a result of the Strategic Plan? We thought aspirationally—imagining that all students are succeeding at the highest levels, are well-prepared for the high school they chose to attend, and furthermore, are equipped for success in the career path and personal life to which they aspire.

We broke into two small groups. The groups were tasked to complete the statements “Hamburg students are _____”, Hamburg graduates are _____”, and Hamburg School is _____” as if we were five years into the future, when our Strategic Plan has come to full fruition. The groups were asked to list key factors that would make their statements reality.

The work of the small groups appears verbatim on the following page.



Group 1

Hamburg Students are loved, valued, challenged in all ways

Hamburg Graduates are advocates for themselves and others

Hamburg School is focused on building community and providing stability

Because:

- Graduates become advocates because Hamburg staff allows them the opportunities to express themselves
- Students are given appropriate boundaries
- Students need to work for their grades and privileges
- Students participate in meaningful community events (cleanup, Memorial Day, etc.)

Group 2

Hamburg Students are confident, well-rounded and engaged lifelong learners

Hamburg Graduates are prepared for their best success

Hamburg School is the foundation of “The Children’s Town”

Because:

- Challenges and leadership exposure
- We meet their needs / support
- Academically meeting @ their level (differentiation)
- We have Sue Mankiw! Preschool
- A staff that never forgets to be and DO AWESOME!!

Each group’s work resonated with all present.

As the meeting concluded, we identified common themes that were consistent in tonight’s work and the work of the previous session. Those themes will become the basis for the goals of the new Strategic Plan. All thus agreed to the following goal areas and subcategories:

- 1. Educational program**
- 2. Resources**
 - financial
 - human
- 3. Community**
 - parental involvement
- 4. Citizenship**



The meeting ended with thanks again to Dr. Sigman and the Board for another productive and meaningful session. The team will meet for a final time on Tuesday, October 3 to write goal statements and supporting objectives for the goal areas we identified.

All interested participants from our school community who were not able to attend our prior meetings are enthusiastically invited to join us at our remaining session, which will begin in the cafeteria at 6:30 pm and finish at 8pm. Light refreshments will be served.

Thanks to all our school stakeholders for your dedication to the Hamburg School District! We are looking forward to an exciting conclusion of our Strategic Planning.

Come join us on Tuesday, October 3, 6:30—8pm, Hamburg School Cafeteria!

