



Palmyra Public School District

Creating a Strategic Plan for the Palmyra Public School District

Mission Statement

The Mission of the Palmyra Public School District is to work cooperatively with the available resources of home and community, including business and industry, to offer each child the educational opportunities that will enable him/her to function politically, economically, and socially in a democratic society and to fully facilitate their development within a safe and secure school environment.

Session 1

What are the Strengths/Achievements and Challenges of the Palmyra Public School District?

On March 26, 2015, Palmyra Public School District administrators, Board of Education members, education staff, parents and community members, eighty (80) in all signed in, with sixty-eight (68) staying for the entire session, came together to initiate strategic planning for the Palmyra Public School District. The first evening's topic focused on the strengths, achievements, and challenges of the Palmyra Public School District. The meeting began with a welcome and introduction by Palmyra Board of Education President, Mrs. Nancy Brett. Superintendent of Schools, Mr. Brian McBride presented the current "State of the Schools." Facilitators Jesse Adams Jr. and Terri Lewis, from New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA), were introduced and Jesse 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 the school districts strengths/achievements and challenges. Participants gathered in randomly assigned groups, six groups in total, engaged in brainstorming the strengths/achievements and challenges. After group discussion, each group identified their consensus points, "Top 10" strengths/achievements and challenges, and presented those to the full group of 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/Achievements & Challenges

Team One:

Strengths/Achievements	Challenges
CSS staff open-minded, flexible, communicative	PHS science/guidance needs improvement
Close-knit community school spirit	Not enough good PR (public relations)
Generally positive changes	Not enough order in classroom/building
Teachers good at getting kids involved, group work hands-on learning	More traditional middle school environment
Positive press in community	Curriculum programs at CSS – PHS (i.e. Spanish) not used to full capacity, leveling (i.e. math and reading)
VHS overcoming our small school	Food-service
Good administration – lots of energy	High school scheduling to tight
Best practices could be shared	Long-term budget
Problems can be solved	Use of assessments
CSS is very inviting	Loss of students to private schools

Team Two:

Strengths/Achievements	Challenges
Technology	Lose funding for testing
Typing, classing and electives	Space and staff
Community	Image – getting the younger kids together
Extracurricular activities	Funding
Small school district	Increase enrollment
Fundraising	Sponsorship – How?
Security of building	Programming sponsorship into the school

Team Three:

Strengths/Achievements	Challenges
Size	Size
Professional development	Performance on standardized tests
Technology and VHS	Intervention – struggling students
Adaptable	Parent participation does not represent student body
Parent support	Family structure
School board	Common core
History	Facilities
Three merging districts	Use of technologies
Safety	Leadership development
Pride in district	Three district disparity

Palmyra Public School District Strategic Planning Meeting #1 Outcomes

Team Four:

Strengths/Achievements	Challenges
Staff and Admin – consistent	Small School – limitations on course offerings
Many opportunities for students outside of classroom	VHS – limited enrollment
<u>Size</u> – Allows for more student participation in many clubs/sports	Revise and Refresh electives
School <u>Pride</u>	More training needed for staff to effectively use new materials and technology
Curriculum	Community not informed about all of the positives in the district
Parent Involvement	Stronger connection needed between communities/borough councils/sending districts
Available technology	Why our residents not sending kids here? (Survey anonymously)
	Utilize On Course more effectively – emails

Team Five:

Strengths/Achievements	Challenges
High school level has seen improved communication	Revision of special education – age appropriate
Charles Street shows great communication as well	Differentiated Instruction
AP Courses	More programs for high schoolers and middle schoolers
Technology	Finding outside sources for funding
Curriculum Coordinator	Use data to direct individual programming
Administration	More secure – moving main office in high school for a one-way in and out model
Hiring good new teachers	High school scheduling – overlapping classes
Small district size	Retaining students
Good community support	Positive PR for schools
Low turnover	Ratio of diverse students to diversified staff
Diversity	Student comfort as buildings age
	Mix of middle school and high school students

Palmyra Public School District Strategic Planning Meeting #1 Outcomes

Team Six:

Strengths/Achievements	Challenges
Community Spirit Lives community respect → family feel	Financial – unfunded mandates (obvious)
Technology growth	Public Relations (better) – improved WEB presence
Recent administration consistency	Technology growth
High Quality/Dedicated Staff	Class size (Elementary)
Celebration of Diversity/Home	Achievement Gap
Pre-K/Full day kindergarten	Filling advanced/challenged student needs within the infrastructure
PTA – Interact/Volunteer	Aging buildings/Physical plant
Character Education/Safe Environment	Staff turnover in CST/Special Education
Extracurricular opportunities	Lack of CSS Support Staff
Maintenance Staff	Proper funding/staffing of Alternative Education
Excellent Support Staff	Integration of STEAM Initiatives into actual classrooms
Serving challenged students within the district	Uniform/Dress Code
Uniforms/Dress Code	Disruption caused by testing – Need to allow excellent teaching to be successful

In looking at the small groups’ consensus points, the following **common themes** appear to be present:

- Strong District Personnel – high quality educators, dedicated, low turnover,
- Community & Culture – small district, pride, diversity, volunteers
- Technology – good growth, VHS
- Communication – positive press, but need more of it
- Facilities – well maintained, security, aging buildings

The second strategic planning session is scheduled for:

Tuesday, April 28, 2015
from 7:00 - 9:00 pm at Palmyra High School Auditorium.
Sign-in begins at 6:45 pm.
Meetings are scheduled for 2 hours and end promptly.

During the April 28th meeting we will create a shared vision together for the future of the Palmyra Public School District . . . we will talk about our aspirations and expectations for our students and district.

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

Please RSVP to the Office of the Superintendent at 856-786-9300, X1013.