



Creating a Strategic Plan for the Norwood Public School District

Mission Statement

Our district's mission is to engage our students
in an exceptional educational experience
that will prepare them for high school, college, career, and life.

We will guide our students toward opportunities
to demonstrate innovation, global leadership, and 21st-Century skills.

We are committed to the education of the whole child
and preparing lifelong learners,
balancing robust academic programs and related arts.

Think • Lead • Serve

Session 1

Identifying Strengths & Challenges of the Norwood School District

On Thursday, September 25, 2026, Norwood Public School District administrators, Board of Education members, staff, parents, and community members, thirty-four (34) in all, came together to initiate strategic planning. The meeting began with a welcome and introduction by Ms. Heather Garcia, Board President. Dr. Timothy Gouraige, Superintendent, presented the current "State of the District" report. Mary Ann Friedman and Melissa Del Rosso, Field Service Representatives, from New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA) were introduced and explained 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, eight groups in all, and engaged in brainstorming the districts strengths and challenges. After group discussion, each group identified their consensus points, "Top 10" strengths and challenges. Attendees reported their consensus points out to the larger group. The large group then identified "Common Themes" that had occurred throughout the small group outcomes.



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, (www.wearenorwood.org/nps), to share the group work during the course of the strategic planning process.

Group Consensus: Strengths/Achievements & Challenges/Opportunities

Group #1:

Strengths/Achievements	Challenges/Opportunities
Language program	Teacher retention
Overall school culture	Providing classroom support & resources
Passion of all stakeholders	New parent communication on practical “how to”
Safety protocols	More information on grade level assessments and what is being assessed
Counseling support / Social Workers	
Library – books not just computers	
Community support / reputation	

Group #2:

Strengths/Achievements	Challenges/Opportunities
Character development programs	Retention of teachers and admin.
Professional Development opportunities	Class size
Teacher expertise	Space
Town (great)	Referendum challenges
PTO / KPSC (Korean Parent School Community)	A.I.
MTSS (Multi-Tiered Systems of Support)	Substitutes
Extracurricular programs	A/B schedule (World Language)
Spec. ed. Inclusion	Revamp mission
Integrated Pre-K	Cost of health benefits
Mentorship with new teachers	Communication with working parents



Group #3:

Strengths/Achievements	Challenges/Opportunities
Opportunity for macro curriculum experiences to identify career paths	Communication that enables parents and students to understand curriculum and class structure
Using Chromebooks K-8 and Mac in HS	AI – who can use, when to use, how to use appropriately
	Working on executive functioning skills that makes sense for students of all ages in a comprehensive way
	Executive functioning possibilities in Eagle period
	Age-appropriate consequences for tardiness
	Website updates

Group #4:

Strengths/Achievements	Challenges/Opportunities
Teachers (amazing) committed	Community Special Ed increase
After school clubs	Unclear curriculum advanced Math
Music program	Lack of advanced ELA (English Language Arts) classes
MD program K-2 teacher	Inclusivity – teaching other kids about it
Addition of BCBA (Board Certified Behavior Analyst)	Classroom size

Group #5:

Strengths/Achievements	Challenges/Opportunities
Great Staff & Teaches	Staff may be new to role responsibilities
Expanded staff	Replenish, restore and recognize for all the hard work accomplished
Part of NVCC (Northern Valley Curriculum Consortium)	Create multiple ways of feedback
Supportive PTO and KPSC (Korean Parent School Community)	Have more anonymous surveys
Safety is improved, having a police officer is great!	Backfields need to be fixed
Awesome, helpful custodians! Willing to go the extra mile!	Lack of Gym class separation
Award-worthy musicals!	Time for Foreign Language is at a minimum
	Schedules late, not complete



Group #6:

Strengths/Achievements	Challenges/Opportunities
Great teachers / staff	Admin. should streamline communication, i.e., weekly newsletter vs. daily emails
PTO good communication	Lack of communication with related services staff
Overall Special Ed program – variety of class types within the program	Teacher / staff retention (turnover) **
Adding Heggarty (literacy curriculum)	Teachers without a contract ***
	PayScale discrepancy within Valley schools
	Do we have a character ed program?

Group #7:

Strengths/Achievements	Challenges/Opportunities
Small size – class sizes / community	Small size – funds
Staff	Budget *\$*\$
Electives / Arts programs	Staff turnover
Two different levels, while still opportunities to interact (Lower School / Upper School)	Space
NVCC consortium	NVCC consortium
Supportive parents	Larger class sizes
Tech department	Don't use the same tech as NVOT (Northern Valley Old Tappan)
WL (World Language) taught by actual teacher	
PreK program	

Group #8:

Strengths/Achievements	Challenges/Opportunities
Students	Clarity / control on tech usage at home
Families / Residents	Teacher and staff retention
Dedicated and collaborative staff	Budget constraints
Quality curriculum	Communication around programming entrance & requirements (Math placement, TAG (Talented & Gifted), NJHS (National Junior Honor Society), MTSS (Multi-Tiered Systems of Support), Spec Ed)
NVCC collaboration	Communication & Transparency outlets
Facilities – clean and well maintained	All – leveled programs
ELA (English Language Arts)	
Career Day / Assemblies / Speakers	



Following each small group reporting out their consensus points, the large group identified the following **common themes**:

Common Themes - Strengths	Common Themes - Challenges
Teachers	Staff turnover
Custodians	Retention
PTO / KPSC	Communication
Students	Budget
Afterschool programs	Program information
NVCC	Space
Addition of MD and PK programs	World Language schedule
Safety	AI (Artificial Intelligence)

The second strategic planning session is scheduled for:

Wednesday, October 15, 2026, at 6 :00 pm

Sign-in begins at 5:45 pm.

Norwood Public School, All-Purpose Room

Meetings #2 and #3 are scheduled for 1.5 hours.

Meetings start and end promptly.

During the October 15th meeting participants will create a shared vision together for the future of the Norwood 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 USING THE GOOGLE RSVP FORM ON THE DISTRICT WEBSITE.