Creating a Strategic Plan for the Montclair Public Schools

Mission Statement

The Montclair Public School District is dedicated to creating a culture of learning and continuous improvement that provides every child with a high quality, creative, innovative, and challenging education, through a magnet system of integrated schools in which every school represents a strong, diverse, and vibrant community of learners.

November 29, 2023: Meeting 2 of 3 - Developing a Vision for the Montclair Public Schools in the Next Five Years

On November 29, 2023 Montclair Public Schools administration, staff, students, board members, parents, and community members came together to continue the strategic planning process. This second meeting's topic focused on creating a shared vision for the Montclair Public Schools in the next five years. Dr. Ponds opened the meeting then Charlene Peterson and Kelly Mitchell, from New Jersey School Boards Association, provided an overview of the steps taken at the November 13th meeting and the small group tasks for tonight's meeting.

To stimulate the visioning process, participants watched a video that made them think about the future that we are preparing our students for and what skills are needed for future success. We envisioned the calendar pages moving forward to the year 2028. Montclair Public Schools is being honored for its outstanding work in advancing student achievement. Participants were asked to give a speech to the state's top educators. What warranted such high recognition – what programs / services / curriculum / student outcomes / best practices / facilities would we expect to see in the district that are succeeding?

Participants then gathered in 9 blended stakeholder groups to brainstorm their visions of how the district achieved this remarkable success. The groups were asked to identify up to their top 10 visionary ideas for the district's success in the year 2028, and to give their speech a title. Outcomes of the small groups were shared with all meeting participants.

Work of the Small Groups:

(There are some group numbers missing due to a consolidation of tables)

Group 2 – "Strengthening the Core"

District has been successful at implementing and maintaining a transparent BUDGET PROCESS	School day was structured to provide maximum benefits & flexibility for students and staff: later school start times, period 0 & 10 (for those who want it) and a staggered school days for evening learners.
District & BOE have cultivated a functioning, working PARTNERSHIP with the town and town council	Universal PreK at every elementary school
Classrooms have been capped at 24 students and all classes are staffed appropriately	Inclusion class model format in every class at every school
Any increase in programming (student options) have been adequately staffed.	Implemented and maintained a functioning and productive AMISTAD curriculum
The magnets at ALL schools have been strengthened and re-established. (Concerns about watering down)	Incubator program started to allow students to work on district's needs (technology, construction, operational) instead of outsourcing these jobs at cost (also extended to parents on volunteer basis)

Group 3 – "Whole Student, Whole Community"

All students learn in interdisciplinary, collaborative ways about 21st century challenges (climate change)	The opportunity gap is notably closing
All teachers are supported to be creative and responsive to their students' needs while teaching the curriculum (e.g. sex ed)	Restorative justice and relational well-being are integrated into the whole district as a practice and cultural norm
Schools, teachers, and students are using technology in thoughtful, critical ways that prepare them for not over reliance in later life. No tech for the sake of tech.	Critical thinking, service learning, and project-based learning help create good citizens and community members.
Our school community values and utilizes the talents of our students, educators, and community members (e.g. Writer's Room)	We have addressed the harms of Covid and have the means to assess our students' capabilities so that we know that students graduating now are able to do the same work as students graduating pre-Covid.
We have buildings that are safe, well-maintained, and where outdoor learning is integrated for all	

Group 5 – "MPS – a Place where Students are Whole and Thriving"

Equity for African American students is a priority	Relevant protective factors for students
School start time & flexible learning time/calendar	Accountability for all
Managing change based on research & data	Dual enrollment/certification programs/trade & skills for all
Restorative justice established in all schools	Fully integrated supports & mental health system
Safe learning environment	Innovative programs
K-3 focus on literacy & reduction of technology	K-12 student equity advocates
Universal PreK for all	

Group 6 – "Montclair Pride: One Happy District – One Successful Community"

Culture of communication so all stakeholders feel they have info they need and the path to get questions answered and resolved.	Students love learning and love school
No student slipping through cracks and entering MHS without basic math & reading skills - accountability	All students receive social-emotional tools to successfully navigate life.
Culture of more effective and equitable interventions for students falling behind	Well-functioning independent support of all teachers & staff realizing their goal of bringing about equity.
Comprehensive plans for assessment of support for additional PD for teachers.	Sustainability practices & education
High level courses & honors will reflect school district demographics	Comprehensive review of magnet system (including school start time)
Teachers have access to & provide great learning tools.	

Group 7 – "Non-Negotiables"

No harassments or assaults	World-class onboarding and teacher training and development – created a time portal
Strong evidence of student growth across the achievement spectrum	Curriculum is integrative, true, honest, and fair; socially just.
Demonstrate flexibility, adaptability in civic engagement	

Group 8 – "Montclair: a District Excelling for the Future"

Closed the achievement gap	National leader in STEAM programming and achievement
Preserved leadership in diversity & integration	Restorative justice in all schools
Renowned leader in sustainability in: facilities, policies & curricula	Spacious carbon neutral facilities & climate resilient outdoor spaces

Teacher & TA in every classroom & paras for IEPs. 100% certified teachers & subs & certified TAs & Paras	Evidence-based policies to support nutrition and sleep hygiene and play time
Individualized approach for academic growth for all students & individualized social-emotional support	

Group 9 – "Montclair Schools Lead on the Strength of the Community – "Freedom Dreaming"

Remove TRACKING – create on ramps & multiple pathways to advancement	Diverse staff
Parent Academy/Tools	Assistive/adaptive technology/equipment (universal design)
Effective communication model/outreach (team approach)	Inclusive spaces/curriculum
ROBUST recreation/enrichment program with transportation	Strengthen 9th grade programs/curriculum/adaptable transition to HS
Full Restorative Justice (RJ) implementation	Strategic Planning on regular intervals

Group 10 – "All Students – Whole Students"

Our teachers are not teaching to the test but are trusted to develop curriculum that is scalable and inclusive. PD/culture	Our leadership is both stable and open to risk-taking.
Our graduates are empathetic, curious, lifelong learners who think critically and analytically	We have a universal/communication & information platform
Our classrooms & physical spaces are flexible to support the full range of learning abilities	Holistic development of students and teachers that is focused on transferable skills and content.
Our buildings are safe and up-to-date (thanks to the Bond)	The achievement and opportunity gap is closed.

Group 11 – "Setting the Scene for Success"

State-of-the-art facilities and sustainability	Cumulative social-emotional learning K-12
Vibrant before and after school K-12 programs	Space to support flexible learning needs
School start times matching neurological research	Implementing research-based teaching practices
Ongoing collaborative professional development & mentoring	Critical thinking/interdisciplinary course options
Preparing students for 21st Century careers	Closing the learning gap.

The third strategic planning session is scheduled for: December 11, 2023.