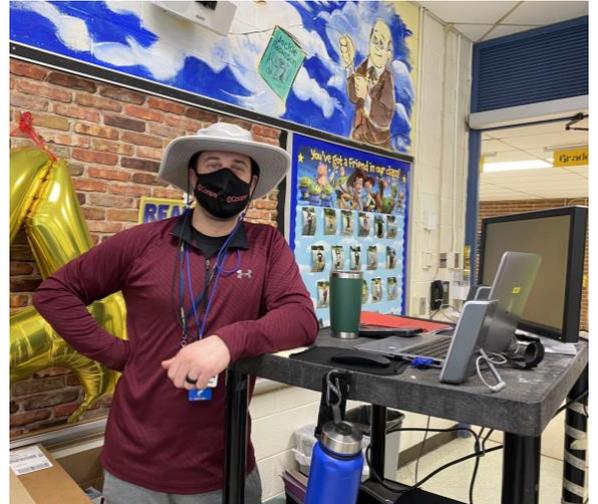


— SUPERINTENDENT FRED MCDOWELL —

# 90 DAY ENTRY PLAN

## Transition Summary Report



**COLLINGSWOOD AND OAKLYN PUBLIC SCHOOLS**





I am truly honored to serve as your Superintendent while furthering the goals of our diverse school community. I have enjoyed engaging community members committed to the long-term success of Collingswood and Oaklyn Public Schools.

In February 2021, I outlined the entry plan process as well as the vision and core beliefs driving my leadership. These beliefs have guided my career as a classroom educator, building leader, and district executive, and are the foundation for my decision-making as an educational leader.

## Vision

I believe all students have the potential for greatness and therefore it is important to regularly challenge the culture of low expectations. My vision consists of being innovative, yet intentional, while developing systems that allow all students to grow and thrive. It also consists of creating safe and nurturing learning environments where all students are valued and supported as they pursue their dreams.

## Equity

I believe our core responsibility is to make sure all students are valued, challenged, and supported based on their strengths and assets. We are fortunate to be members of a diverse community and must leverage this as a strength while preparing students for the future. We must embrace equity and provide the necessary resources and support(s) to ensure all students are able to achieve.

## High-Quality Instruction

I believe the most important aspect of our work is what happens in the classroom. We must ensure that educators have the necessary resources and tools to provide high-quality instruction. Because our educators have the closest relationship with our students, we must also empower them to adjust instruction to meet the evolving needs of our students during and after COVID-19.

## Collaboration

I believe that students, families, schools, and communities must work together closely to achieve their goals. Deep engagement and collaboration built on trust, solution-based problem solving, and productive conflict resolution leads to better outcomes for students. It is vital that each member is valued and willing to work together to move the work forward.

## Continuous Improvement

I believe that every solution has an expiration date. Data driven practices allow us to review and reflect on what is working, what needs to be improved, and what comes next. Learning from our successes and challenges is essential when determining the most effective strategies and practices needed to achieve our vision for supporting all students.

The entry plan focused on learning as much as possible about our schools and community so that we build on our strengths and continue to improve. Due to the pandemic, the engagement process consisted of a combination of in-person and virtual meetings. Listening and learning is a powerful tool that will help us to refine our goals, align resources, and move forward. The entry plan was divided into (4) guiding principles:

## **SUPPORTING PEOPLE**

Learning about the current direction of the district as much as possible to gain insight into its strengths, challenges, and areas of improvement.

## **IMPROVING EFFECTIVENESS AND RESPONSIVENESS**

Learning how the district's initiatives and priorities are being implemented in our schools by our dedicated staff, publicized, and understood in our community.

## **SOLIDIFYING DISTRICT PRIORITIES**

Learning about the values, norms, and expectations of the community and how the district's initiatives are prioritized. Reduce "priority overload" and focus on strategies determined to have the greatest impact on student outcomes.

## **ORGANIZING DEPARTMENTS AND RESOURCES**

Learning about district investments and resources allocated based on student needs. Using a transparent and reciprocal process to leverage the strengths of the district. Accelerating student progress by supporting the efforts of our educators and reinforcing positive school culture.

# Objectives

Since February 1, we've been focused on the current business of the district while transitioning from remote and hybrid learning to full-time in-person instruction for September 2021. The objectives were as follows:

## **LISTEN**

Engage with students, parents, teachers, principals, support staff, community leaders, elected officials, business leaders, philanthropists, activists, and media outlets to hear their perspectives on Collingswood and Oaklyn Public Schools and what it might take to improve all schools

## **SHARE**

Present my leadership story, educational philosophy, and guiding principles. This will help others understand what drives me to help young people succeed. It also gives others the freedom to bring their passion to this work to raise expectations for all Collingswood, Oaklyn, and Woodlynne students

## **STUDY**

Review the history of the Collingswood and Oaklyn Public Schools and collect data on all schools, student performance, demographic needs, district levels of service, and community feedback.

## **PARTNER**

Intentionally build relationships with our teachers, school leaders, parents, and community stakeholders to significantly improve our ability to meet the needs of all students.

## **PLAN**

Review the current strategic plan and district initiatives to identify priorities, develop action steps for staff, provide guidance to the Board, and prepare for the budget and legislative agendas.

**SUPPORTING PEOPLE:** Learning about the current direction of the district as much as possible to gain insight into its strengths, challenges, and areas of improvement.

## ONE TO ONE MEETINGS WITH ALL DEPARTMENT HEADS AND SCHOOL LEADERS

As a key component of the listening and learning tour, one-on-one meetings were scheduled to begin building rapport and setting up opportunities for ongoing dialogue among school and district leaders. They also served as opportunities for the Superintendent to review expectations, roles, and responsibilities.

### Growth Areas Identified During One-on-One Meetings

- Undefined roles exist among administration
- A nimble infrastructure is needed; shift focus when necessary
- Targeted alignment of effort (K-5, 6-12)
- Organizational structure is confusing and needs clarity
- Communicate the chain of command to the community
- Reinforcement and prioritization of mental health services
- Re-establish partnerships among Borough leaderships and public officials
- Plan for and address future infrastructure needs
- Identify external resources and support structures
- Formalized support for disengaged students
- Increase consistency between elementary and secondary schools
- Establish formal leadership pipelines and mentoring programs
- Develop formal systems to increase staff diversity
- Improve partnerships with colleges and universities
- Invest in formal systems of communication, changing community perception
- Invest in systems of support for staff to manage stress more effectively
- Establish systems for program evaluation and review
- Establish a culture that allows innovation and responsiveness
- Shift to a coaching, growth, and development culture
- Provide clarity in site-based leadership and shared decision-making
- Improve levels of intervention and support to schools
- Develop formal systems to improve college and career readiness
- Develop formal systems to improve gifted and talented services
- Increase opportunities for family engagement and partnership
- Define equity in policy and practice, shift into action
- Integrate social justice advocacy with the equity work
- Develop equitable systems to ensure all students get the support(s) they need
- Develop systems to transform students into global competitors
- Improve the work-life balance and collaboration among the leadership team
- Improve the use of data to drive the decision-making process

During this period, the Superintendent was able to conclude that greater systems of accountability and clarity were needed. It also became evident that data-informed systems to address instructional alignment, staffing goals, and student support were inconsistent and need reinforcement. Therefore, it is further recommended that targeted data collection take place as a precursor to the district engaging in long-term strategic planning in the Fall.

Meetings also highlighted the need to rebuild and re-establish relationships with key stakeholders (Borough, Law Enforcement, Families, Partner Agencies, Non-profits, Higher Education Institutions, Businesses, and etc.) The need for authentic partnership aligned to long-term strategic planning is also recommended.

Additional growth areas identified during the meetings also concluded that greater efforts must be given to improve the levels of intervention and supports to schools; given the level of uncertainty of a post-pandemic school community. This requires a shift from a compliance-driven culture to a growth and development culture with continued opportunities for site-based leadership and shared decision-making as we prepare for long-term strategic planning.

## ASSEMBLE SUPERINTENDENT TRANSITION COMMITTEE

To assist Dr. McDowell as he transitions into Collingswood and Oaklyn Public Schools, a team of outside education experts, district staff, and community members was formed to conduct a targeted review of the school district. The transition team will review district and school level data in several areas and interface with numerous stakeholders to highlight the strengths of the district and note areas where additional focus is needed. Through structured discussions, data review, and activities, the transition team will work to answer the guiding questions listed in the Superintendent Entry Plan. The transition team's focus will be in the following areas: Governance/ Board of Education, Organizational Capacity & Alignment, Student Achievement, and Community & Public Relations

### Transition Committee Membership

- Dr. Fred McDowell, Superintendent
- Beth Ann Coleman, Business and Finance
- Jen McPartland, Curriculum and Instruction
- Winsor Yamamoto, District Performance
- Dr. Elizabeth Whitehouse, Special Services
- Dr. Jack McMullin, Principal and Supervisor Association
- Rick Pentz, Collingswood Education Association
- Elizabeth Solowey, Oaklyn Education Association
- Andrew DeMarco, Building Services Employees
- Jennifer Boulden, Oaklyn School
- Jackie Walters, Woodlynne School
- James Maley, Borough Mayor
- Robert Lewandowski, Borough Commissioner
- Cassandra Duffey, Borough Administrator
- Rebecca Callaway, Business Development
- Chuck Lehman, Oaklyn Borough Representative
- Carissa Schanely, Collingswood Library
- Dr. Shelley Zion, Rowan University
- Dr. Joseph Youngblood, Keane University
- Ali Robinson-Rogers, SD of Philadelphia
- Alan Trotty, Community Parent Involvement
- Kim Brooks, Parent/Advocate (Secondary)
- Sara Bradley, Parent/Advocate (Elementary)
- Meggie Crnic, Tatem PTA
- Julie Schneider, Sharp PTA
- Jennifer Rickards, Oaklyn PTA

## VISIT ALL SCHOOLS IN COLLINGSWOOD, OAKLYN, AND WOODLYNNE

The Superintendent participated in (9) targeted learning walks with the School Leaders to collect initial data regarding instructional leadership capacity, preview classroom environments, observe school culture and climate, and inspect the physical plant of each campus. Site visits were conducted at the following campuses: Garfield, Newbie, Sharp, Tatem, Zane North, Oaklyn School, Woodlynne School, Collingswood Middle School, and Collingswood High School. Instructional walkthroughs took place in a sampling of classrooms to observe the quality of instruction and level of rigor. The site visits also provided an opportunity to observe the dynamics of the schools' culture as well as the needs of the facility. Focus groups were also conducted to seek input from students, staff, and families.

### Growth Areas Identified During School Visits

#### Student-Centered

- More challenging content during the school day
- More homework and opportunities for practice
- Differentiation for advanced versus needing support
- Classroom: Deeper questions from teachers
- Classroom: More partner and group-based activities
- More enrichment and work beyond ELA and Math
- Access to Office Hours and Academic Support
- Extended learning time opportunities
- Rotate Optional classes: Electives offered in ES
- Orientation sessions on campus
- Maker spaces available (STEM)
- Flexible use of time during the day (brain-breaks)
- Greater emphasis on outdoor education
- Update the school day start and stop times
- Survey students more; seek opinions more often

#### School-Facing

- Identify afterschool student support options
- Identify summer enrichment and acceleration options
- Gifted and Talented programming options
- Identify supports for field trips and experiential learning
- Community Schools guidance and support
- Ensure equitable access to technology resources
- Expand SEL and mental health supports
- Focus on parental empowerment and partnership
- Strategic partnerships aligned with academic needs
- Evaluate student code of conduct (Disproportionality)
- Explore options for in-school intervention
- Update course catalog based on student feedback
- Review and update promotion standards and policies
- Address first generation to college challenges
- Leverage the power of strong teacher leaders to support district change

## School Leaders

- Increase instructional leadership capacity
- Provide direction around data driven decision-making
- Clarify expectations around observations and feedback
- Update and differentiate professional learning
- Reduction of district initiative overload
- Update procedures, metrics, and accountability tools
- Identify opportunities for calibration/norming
- Provide clarity around site-based leadership

## District Office

- Review manual processes and seek efficiencies
- Identification of instructional focus/academic priorities
- Update the District Communications Plan
- Facilities Management Plan Review needed
- Special Education Program Review needed
- Asset map family resources and services
- Identify strategy partnerships aligned to school needs

Students provided much needed feedback with a focus on the learning day. Feedback included the flexible usage of time with opportunities for out of school supports for struggling students. Feedback also referenced the need for data to inform the level of personalization students receive with an emphasis on advanced students versus those who struggle. Students expressed the need to be challenged more in class and provided rigorous hands-on projects. Students further recommended that great detail be paid to addressing disproportionality and inequities in the district's disciplinary processes. Students also expressed the need for their voice to be elevated and included in shared decision-making processes.

With regards to school culture, our students expressed a wide range of positive suggestions. Students expressed the need to continue building relationships among their teachers and classmates through intentional activities like clubs, sports, and mindfulness exercises. Students also expressed interest in learning more about music, new languages, and new cultures.

School-based staff indicated the need for better alignment of effort with regards to college and career readiness. Staff also referenced the need to use data to identify and overcome barriers preventing students from meeting the standard. Staff requested additional guidance and support for disengaged students and families as well as supports to address mental health concerns. Staff also indicated that the use of virtual meetings and forums should continue to ensure that families have consistent access to school and district staff and communication can be maintained.

School leaders indicated the need for additional support in the areas of instructional leadership post-pandemic. Data-driven decision making and educator tools were also referenced as a means to address high levels of anxiety and uncertainty. School leaders further indicated their desire to collaborate and norm around high leverage instructional strategies and operational best practices.

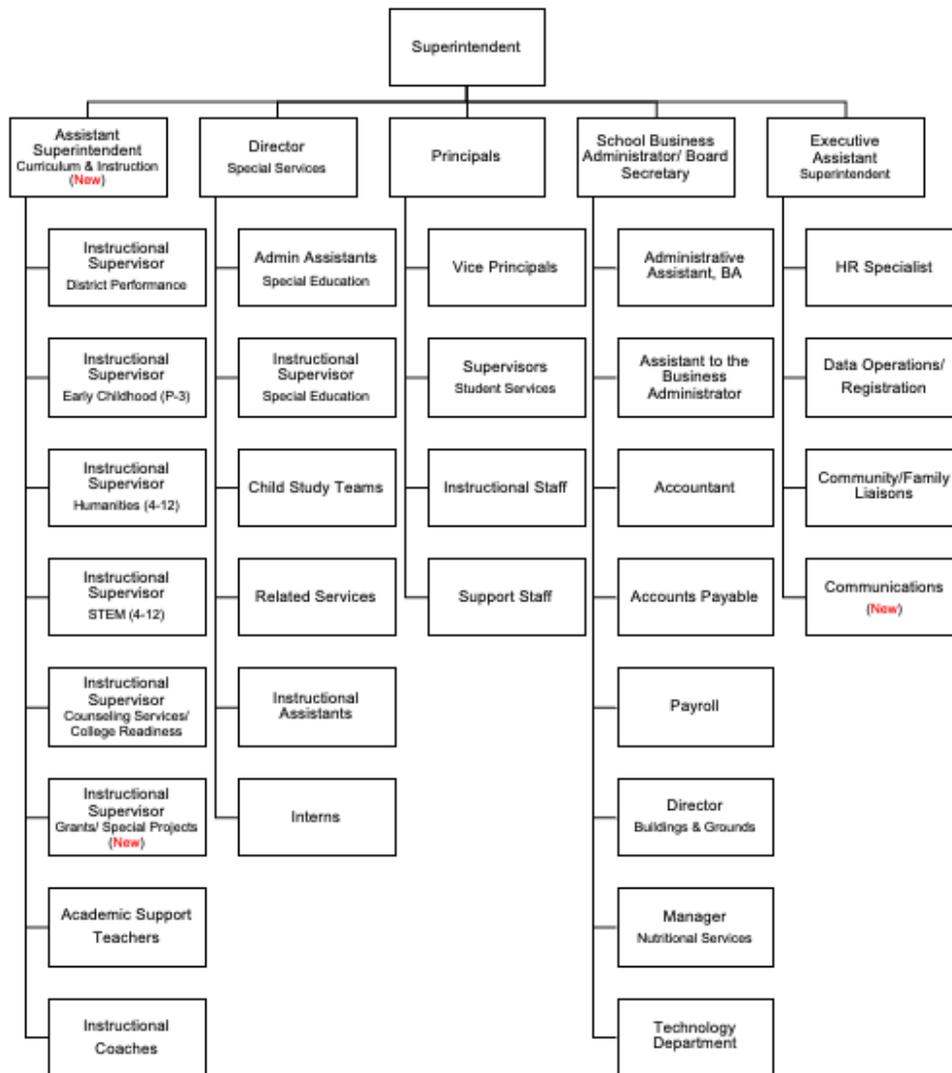
The District Office is in the process of reorganization and will be engaging in series of summer leadership retreats to prioritize supports to be provided to schools. The culminating event will be a large convening in preparation for school reopening in the Fall.

## **MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DISTRICT OFFICE REORGANIZATION**

The purpose of organizational restructure is to strengthen Collingswood Public School's district office so that it functions as a high performing service organization focused on helping principals improve teaching and learning in schools. Transforming the district office will require a multi-tiered approach comprised of more than just organizational structures, adding or eliminating positions, or improving the efficiency of historical operational processes. It demands that leaders take a deep look at the current work of each administrative role and ask: To what extent can we show that this work is connected to the improvement of teaching and learning? The initial reorganization of district office structures sets us on a path to begin moving towards the shift needed to get to the next normal; post-pandemic.

The proposed district office recommendations below seek to address gaps limiting key opportunities to support districtwide improvements to teaching and learning. In general, districts do not see improvements to teaching and learning without substantial engagement by their district offices in helping all schools build their capacity. Principals are the primary agents of change within the district and therefore in need of support. The recommendations take initial steps by: focusing centrally on teaching and learning improvement through principal support, engaging the district office in system-level reform, remaking daily work practices of administrative staff and their relationships with schools, and prioritizing school support and responsiveness. District office transformation is not simply a restructuring of the district organizational chart, but an intentional approach to change practices to improve teaching and learning for all students (Honig, et al, 2010).

PROPOSED ORGANIZATIONAL CHART SY2021-2022



**Recommendations for Updated District Organizational Structures**

- Asst Superintendent, Curriculum & Instruction (New)
- Supervisor, Grants/Special Projects (New)
- Communications Liaison (New)
- Supervisor, Early Childhood (P-3)
- Supervisor, Humanities (4-12)
- Supervisor, STEM (4-12)
- Elementary Principals (Conversion)
- Director, Special Services (Conversion)
- Supervisor, Special Education (K-12)
- Supervisor, Counseling Services (K-12)
- Supervisor, District Performance (K-12)

The proposed district organizational structure reflects a streamlined level of supervision with direct lines of accountability focused on increasing school-based support. The newly created Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction shall oversee, coordinate, and supervise the curriculum, instruction, and assessment programs in the District to ensure all students are receiving a high-quality instructional program. This role provides an additional layer of leadership and accountability to key academic offices. The Assistant Superintendent supervises the content-based Instructional Supervisors and other academic staff as designated.

Instructional Supervisors provide leadership in the supervision, development, implementation, and coordination of the district’s curriculum. Each content area will assist in all duties related to the instruction, supervision, evaluation, and administration of schools. Leaders will work closely with educators in developing curriculum and the formulation of philosophy and objectives related to instruction. Recommended roles highlight the need for targeted support and include

the following specialties: District Performance, Early Childhood (P-3), Humanities (4-12), STEM (4-12), Counseling/College Readiness (K-12), Grants/ Professional Development, Special Education, and Student Services.

Site-based leadership and accountability will continue and expand with the conversion of building administrators to the role of Principal in all schools. Principals provide leadership and managerial oversight to the instructional program and school operations to ensure a school climate that fosters the educational development of every student. And finally, communications are vital to the success of the district and therefore it is recommended that the district engage in a shared-service agreement to bring communications support to Collingswood and Oaklyn Public Schools.

## REVIEW PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS

Due to the pandemic, professional development focused on the following topics: Equitable learning opportunities in a remote/hybrid environment, culturally responsive pedagogy, and State-mandated training (educator evaluation, anti-bullying, asthma, bloodborne pathogens, child abuse, discrimination, sexual harassment, suicide prevention, and hazard communication. For the upcoming school year, a data collection instrument will be launched to solicit feedback for additional opportunities to be considered based on feedback gathered during school-site visits.

### Themes Identified for Future Professional Development

- Trauma-Informed Practices
- Restorative Approaches
- Social Emotional Learning
- Student Engagement Strategies
- Visible Learning
- Early Literacy
- Technology Tools
- Math Development
- Writing Support
- Responsive Classrooms
- Culture of Care
- Instructional Coaching
- Connected Action Roadmap
- Data Tools

Based on the range of uncertainty associated with returning to full-time in-person instruction in the Fall, it is recommended that the District prioritize professional learning and revisit high quality topics that were paused during the pandemic. It is also recommended that professional learning sessions be differentiated to respect the range of expertise present in our district while increasing educator engagement and consistency of implementation.

## REVIEW AND EVALUATE PLANS FOR STAFFING, RECRUITMENT, AND RETENTION

The District implemented its mentoring plan for the 2020-2021 school year. Topics included: New staff academy, routines in the classroom, IEP/504 implementation, workshop model of reading instruction, secondary in-school resources, school law, social-emotional learning, and end of year procedures. Although important, the mentoring plan does not explicitly contain content or activities focused on staff retention. Staff handbooks also were not updated for the 2020-2021 school year. Focus groups of educators took place across the district and several themes and recommendations emerged.

### Themes Identified for Talent Management

- Formal Screening/Interview Protocols
- Develop a Targeted Recruitment Plan
- Identify a Recruitment Partner or Consortium
- Identify Targets for Staff Retention
- Identify Targets for Staff Diversity
- Refine Induction Programs and Services
- Refine Student Teacher Selection Processes
- Refine Intern Selection Processes
- Develop Leadership Pipelines
- Refine Mentoring Programs
- Update the Staff Handbooks
- Participate in Personnel Leadership Networks
- Invest in Branded Organizational Materials
- Establish Partnerships with Colleges & Universities

It is also important to note that the pandemic has increased the level of anxiety and uncertainty among our educators. Despite increases in educator vaccination rates and improved testing mechanisms, educator stress levels are on the rise. Based on the latest Education Week Research Center COVID-19 national survey, the tension caused from the shutdown, the return to remote instruction, and the transition to hybrid instruction has generated more stress than pre-pandemic.

The American Psychological Association (APA) released national survey results (February 2021) on stress indicating that majority of adults (61%) reported experiencing weight gain, 67% reported experiencing sleep issues, 47% reported delaying or cancelling health care services, and 48% of parents reported increases in overall stress compared to pre-pandemic conditions. The study also reported that essential workers (educators) were more than twice as likely to have not received treatment from a mental health professional; despite a mental health disorder diagnosis. As a measure to support staff

retention, it is recommended that additional resources and supports be provided to school-based staff. Areas to include: school culture, staff culture, mental health support, physical health and wellness, and general team-building.

Furthermore, it is vital that the school district re-evaluates the decision to contract with outside agencies for key instructional positions. In order to increase the consistency of Instructional Assistants in the district, it is recommended that specific positions be returned to district employ in the most vulnerable and highly specialized self-contained classrooms and our preschool classrooms. Financial review and negotiation with the Collingswood Educator Association are needed to facilitate this process.

In addition, it is important that the district increase opportunities to grow from within. The transition from classroom teacher to administrator is often very steep with little to no scaffold. Therefore, it is recommended that the district work collaboratively with the Collingswood Educator Association and the Collingswood Principal and Supervisor Association to establish formal teacher leader roles that allow our outstanding educators to refine and demonstrate leadership skills while remaining in the classroom until ready to make the shift to administration when new opportunities arise.

And finally, based on the complexity of the school district and its operations, it is recommended that the proposed Instructional Supervisor for Grants and Special Projects work collaboratively with the proposed Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction and the Business Administrator develop a comprehensive professional learning plan that accounts for every tier of role within the district. The educational ecosystem demands that Collingswood and Oaklyn Public Schools transition to become learning organizations.

**IMPROVING EFFECTIVENESS AND RESPONSIVENESS: Learning how the district's initiatives and priorities are being implemented in our schools by our dedicated staff, publicized, and understood in our community.**

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## **REVIEW CURRICULUM MATERIALS, TECHNOLOGY ASSETS, AND TRAINING**

The NJ Student Learning Standards (NJSLS) are reviewed and renewed every five years. The NJ Department of Education provides the standards which provide local school districts with clear and specific benchmarks for student achievement in nine content areas. Developed and reviewed by panels of teachers, administrators, parents, students, and representatives from higher education, business, and the community, the standards are influenced by national standards, evidence-based practice, and student needs. The standards define a "Thorough and Efficient Education" as guaranteed in 1875 by the New Jersey Constitution. Currently the standards are designed to prepare our students for college and careers by emphasizing high-level skills needed to succeed in a global society. Annual appointments and approvals will continue to ensure that curriculum is sufficient for students to meet the evolving needs of tomorrow.

Preschool classrooms are currently implementing Creative Curriculum. *The Creative Curriculum® System for Preschool* is a comprehensive, research-based curriculum system designed to help educators at all levels of experience plan and implement a developmentally appropriate, content-rich program for children with diverse backgrounds and skill levels. The curriculum emphasizes knowledge-building and daily practice resources in tandem, to create a cohesive system that supports teachers. The knowledge-building curriculum utilizes the most current research and best practices for early childhood education. The daily practice resources contain step-by-step guidance to help teachers organize and manage every moment of the day, intentionally and effectively. The learning objectives are often predictive of school success and aligned with state early learning standards. The preschool curriculum also helps teachers ensure that they are focusing on what matters most for children at every age with built-in support for all learners, with specific guidance for working with English- and dual-language learners, advanced learners, and children with learning differences.

The elementary curriculum includes: Reader's and Writer's Workshop, Math, Science, Social Studies, World Language (Spanish), Art, Health/Physical Education, Gifted and Talented, Vocal Music, String Music, Technology, and ESL. The NJ Department of Education (NJDOE) provides access to model curriculum for grades K-12. The purpose of providing a model is to assist districts and schools with implementation of the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards by providing an example from which to work and/or a product for implementation. Each unit contains targeted student learning objectives that identify what students need to know and be able to do. The six-week formative assessments included in the model curriculum help clarify the level of rigor expected from the standards and provide a set of assessment tools that are often difficult for districts and schools to create on their own. Formal cycles of curriculum and assessment review take place on each school

campus to ensure that schools are differentiating based on the unique needs of their students. With the reorganization of the District administrative structure and the pending strategic planning process, additional investigation is needed to determine if the curricular and assessment tools are sufficient for all students to meet the standard.

There is also interest in the community from native English-speaking families in helping students develop the benefits of bilingualism, biliteracy, and cross-cultural competency that stem from Dual Language. Research indicates that in an increasingly globalized society, the need for bilingual and multilingual skills has increased, and those who know both English and another language will have economic and political advantages. In addition to having in-depth knowledge of another language, this skill set has been shown to contribute to a cognitive benefit in creativity and linguistic awareness, as well as cross-cultural understanding. Other research suggests that students in Dual Language programs are more likely to stay in school and continue into postsecondary education. The NJ Department of Education recognizes the need for biliteracy and has developed a process by which students can demonstrate proficiency in English and one or more world languages through the Seal of Biliteracy program; which is an endorsement to the high school diploma. The Seal of Biliteracy opens up opportunities for those pursuing higher education or joining the workforce. Therefore, it is recommended that the district pursue the feasibility of developing a K-12 dual language program to support the growth and development of Collingswood, Oaklyn, and Woodlynne students.

The middle school curriculum includes: Writer's Workshop, Language Arts, Math, Math Lab, Science, Social Studies, Learning Lab, Health/Physical Education, Technology Education, Spanish Culture and Communication, and Arts. In addition, students are afforded an array of key electives in the areas of Journalism/Creative Writing, Arts, Music, Multimedia, Nutrition, Theatre, and STEM. Based on feedback from students, further review is needed to determine the level of engagement and performance with the existing program of study. It is recommended that student voice and college and career readiness standards drive the catalog of middle school courses and programs offered on an annual basis. It is also recommended that greater emphasis be placed on the transition in thinking, rigor, and expectations as students shift from the middle school to the high school. Further planning and collaboration between the middle and high school are needed to ensure there is a definitive Grades 6-12 articulation aligned to the college and career readiness standards.

The high school curriculum includes: English, Math, Science, Social Studies, Arts, Health/Physical Education, Technical Education, Family and Consumer Science, Business Education, Foreign Language, and Modified Curriculum. Students are afforded the ability to participate in a range of course levels based on rigor to include: Levels 1-5, Pre-AP, Honors, and Advanced Placement (AP). Greater emphasis must be placed on cultivating partnerships with colleges and universities to increase college-credit bearing options for advanced students. This will provide additional value to Collingswood, Oaklyn, and Woodlynne families on a college trajectory. Based on feedback from students, further review is needed to determine the level of engagement and participation within the existing program of study. It is recommended that student voice, college and career readiness standards, and college readiness assessment data be used to drive the catalog of high school courses and programs offered on an annual basis. It is further recommended that Collingswood Middle School and High School participate in SAT School Day for Grades 8-12.

SAT School Day provides schools, districts a way to offer the SAT to students in school, on a weekday, expanding access to a globally recognized college admission test that's widely accepted at U.S. colleges. By breaking down barriers to access, this recommendation can have a profound impact on the school community—opening doors to college, scholarships, and financial aid for every student. It also supports equity as students have the opportunity to test at their own school, thus cultivating a college-going culture. This recommendation also provides tangible data which will inform the program of study annually. It also increases objectivity (freedom from bias) and attempts to remove subjectivity (use of feelings) and implicit or unconscious biases that exist within the current student counseling process for course selection.

A key component of this recommendation is the utilization of AP Potential tool to drive student course offerings and selection processes. AP Potential is a research-driven, web-based tool that helps identify AP students and choose the AP courses that interest them. AP Potential is rooted in research showing that PSAT/NMSQT scores, and by extension SAT scores, predict performance on specific AP Exams — often with more accuracy than other traditionally used methods. This recommendation will also further boost the confidence of our students with corresponding services like SAT Practice which provides students with a personalized plan and integrated coaching tools for teachers to view progress and support their students.

The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) introduced research-based metrics to more appropriately assess that students are college ready, career ready and life ready (Redefining Ready). The initiative further introduced national college and career readiness indicators for school districts to consider. The indicators below will be helpful as the district

establishes its portrait of the ideal experiences needed for all students to become Collingswood graduates. Further discussions will take place throughout the strategic planning process in the Fall with regards to an appropriate framework.

## Redefining Ready: National College and Career Readiness Indicators

Students are **College Ready** if they meet either the academic indicators **OR** standardized testing benchmarks listed below.

### Academic Indicators

GPA 2.8 out of 4.0 and **one** or more of the following academic indicators:

- Advanced Placement Exam (3+)
- Advanced Placement Course (A, B or C)
- Dual Credit College English and/or Math (A, B or C)
- College Developmental/Remedial English and/or Math (A, B or C)
- Algebra II (A, B or C)
- International Baccalaureate Exam (4+)

### Standardized Testing Benchmarks (minimum score)

- SAT Exam: Math (530) | Reading and Writing (480)
- ACT Exam: English (18) | Reading (22) | Science (23) | Math (22)
- College Readiness Placement Assessment (determined by post-secondary institution)

### Additional Factors that Contribute to College Success

Earning As, Bs, Cs; FAFSA Completion; Enrollment in career pathway course sequence; College Academic Advising; Participation in College Bound Bridge Programs; Senior year math class; Completion of a math class after Algebra II

Students are **Career Ready** if they have identified a career interest and meet two of the behavioral and experiential benchmarks listed below. In addition, students entering the military upon graduation must meet the passing scores on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) for each branch of the military.

Career Cluster Identified and **two** or more of the following benchmarks:

- 90% Attendance
- 25 hours of Community Service
- Workplace Learning Experience
- Industry Credential
- Dual Credit Career Pathway Course
- Two or more organized Co-Curricular activities

## REVIEW EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLANS, PROTOCOLS, AND SYSTEMS OF SUPPORT

The District Safety and Security Plan was completed September 2020. Unanticipated tragic events can quickly escalate into a school-wide catastrophe if not dealt with quickly and effectively. Therefore, in order to minimize the chaos, rumors, and impact it is vital that we have a solid response plan. The purpose of the plan was to establish a common set of policies and guidelines to be utilized consistently throughout the county to ensure emergency personnel can act regardless of jurisdiction. The plan also seeks to empower first responders with the authority and responsibility to take immediate action, consistent with their training and experience, to contain, and if necessary, to neutralize active shooters. In addition, the plan seeks to prepare school administrators and faculty to respond appropriately to violent criminal acts, natural emergencies, and general safety concerns of students and staff.

The pandemic disrupted the district's ability to consistently implement the full scope of the plan. Drills were performed out of compliance with the missing component of first responder collaboration. The use of unannounced practice drills and lockdown events was non-existent due to the impact of low in-person attendance brought on by remote and hybrid instruction. What further complicated practice drills were the establishment of cohorts as a mitigation strategies to ensure contact tracing protocols could be consistent. This limited the district's ability to receive and provide feedback in an effort to refine processes.

The Superintendent met directly with Police Chief Carey and Fire Chief Davis. Opportunities for increased communication and collaboration were discussed. The need for coordinated safety planning and practice drills were also discussed, with an emphasis on Camden County Active Shooter Drills as well as Fire Safety and Emergency Management Drills. Since 2014, there has been a steady increase in gun violence in our country and region. The pandemic has further exacerbated concerns. Per national data collection, mass shootings are identified as violent incidents involving 4 or more persons. According to the National Gun Violence Archive, there were 419 mass shootings in 2019, 600 mass shootings in 2020, and as of May 10<sup>th</sup>, there have been 215 mass shootings for 2021. In an effort to avoid unnecessary catastrophe in our school community, there has been continued discussion on formalizing the relationship between the District and the Collingswood Police Department through the deployment of a trained and fully-equipped law enforcement officer.

The youth of this Borough are our most cherished resource and must be both protected and developed to its greatest potential. As such, the Collingswood Police Department in cooperation with the Collingswood Board of Education has established what is known as the School Resource Officer Program. This program is designed to enhance school safety and improve the educational environment by reducing juvenile delinquency through a collaborative effort between schools and law enforcement that focuses on education, prevention, problem-solving and mediation of conflict, communication and sharing of information.

The School Resource Officer position is intended to provide a uniformed police presence in the school to stabilize the educational environment and provide the students, staff, and administrators with a liaison to this department. It is anticipated that the presence of this officer will engender a cooperative effort between the school and law enforcement communities designed to identify groups and individuals whose purpose may be to disrupt educational and/ or extra-curricular activities, threaten or intimidate individuals or groups, or cause personal injury or property damage. Additionally, this officer will be available to provide advice and guidance to students and staff, assist with problem-solving and mediation of conflict, and where necessary, recommend and refer students and their families to the appropriate agency for counseling and/ or treatment of various societal problems. This role would add an additional layer of support to the district as well as provide additional opportunities for relationship-building and communication among students, staff, and families.

The continued partnership with the fire department focused on increasing student programming and in-class support. Fire Chief Davis also presented the District with an opportunity to utilize their portable generator trailer in the event of power loss. Partnership and coordination with Buildings and Grounds is needed to move forward. Coordination of services and support will be coordinated by the Supervisor of Safety and Student Services. With the re-emergence of in-person learning in the Fall, the District Safety and Security Team convened to discuss concerns and opportunities to improve protocols and processes.

### Themes Identified for Safety & Security

- Maintain the No Visitor Policy (Appointment Only)
- Security Vestibule needed for the Middle School
- ID Badges for Students
- Panic Button Protocols for Staff
- Safety Drills Practice (Announced/Unannounced)
- Active Shooter Drills (Camden County)
- Support for Social Media Conflicts
- Perimeter of the Building (Door Alarms Needed)
- Supervision Plan for Lunch Periods
- Increased partnership with first responders
- Stronger law enforcement presence on campus
- Metal detection needed at primary entrances
- Site Review of Security Camera Locations
- Identify Additional Mental Health Supports

### REVIEW PLANS TO SUPPORT PUBLIC RELATIONS AND COMMUNICATION

In 2019, the district developed a comprehensive communications plan to establish a link between the district and internal staff, the district and families with school-aged children, and between the district and community members without school-aged children. During the fall of 2018 through winter of 2019, the district contracted with the Camden County Educational Services Commission to conduct a Communications Audit. The audit identified (4) areas of focus: consistent messaging and branding, communication within the school district, communications with families of school-age children, and communications with community members without school-age children. Theories of action were established with sets of actions and the work began prior to the pandemic.

The National Public Relations Association states, "Educational public relations is a planned and systematic management function to help improve the programs and services of an educational organization. It relies on a comprehensive two-way communications process involving both internal and external publics, with a goal of stimulating a better understanding of the

role, objectives, accomplishments and needs of the organization. Educational public relations programs assist in interpreting public attitudes, identify and help shape policies and procedures in the public interest, and carry involvement and information activities which earn public understanding and support.”

We are living in the media age and school communication needs have increased dramatically and become more complex. Successful school district must develop and execute its communication plans through both print/electronic media and face-to-face communication, and to handle community engagement with the multitude of media weekly. The pandemic has further complicated this challenge due to the high levels of technical data, public health guidance, and polarized political debate regarding phased mitigation, prevention, and school reopening. Unfortunately, school districts have been under attack due to the anxiety and uncertainty associated with the pandemic. Successful school districts publicize the positive news about student/staff achievement and programs, and develop a coordinated proactive, rather than reactive, approach that anticipates problems before they develop. The scope of school district public relations has also expanded from what in the past was mostly written communication, to a greatly increased need for face-to-face communication with the many constituencies in the community.

Further analysis and program evaluation is needed to determine if the current plan is adequate for the needs that have emerged during the pandemic. In addition, it is recommended that part-time personnel be hired to focus on communications and public information (Communications/Public Information Liaison).

### **REVIEW USAGE OF DISTRICT COMMUNICATION/SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS**

The district made the decision to invest in the digital communication tools ThrillShare and Apteegy to manage the school district websites and social media channels. These powerful tools are currently underutilized. It is recommended that the proposed Communications/Public Information Liaison implement the District Communications Plan using these resources. Another school community gem not being fully utilized are the Collingswood High School TV Production and Digital Production/Audio Engineering programs, and the Collingswood Middle School Design Club. Increasing opportunities for student voice while leveraging their technical skills presents additional options to engage students and families currently disconnected from the learning environment.

### **REVIEW FINANCIAL SYSTEMS/FISCAL CONTROLS, AUDIT FINDINGS, AND GRANT COMPLIANCE**

To ensure good financial stewardship of available resources, the district has established a calendar. Each month the Finance Team completes tasks that moves the district one step closer to budget submission. Since 2008, the Business Office has also established a manual containing standard operating procedures with multiple components of internal controls and ongoing fiscal monitoring. The district also performs monthly audits to ensure that internal controls are being adhered to. The district is also closely monitored and supported by the Camden County Department of Education Business Office. In addition, the district undergoes a rigorous external audit to ensure that state and local revenues are being utilized efficiently and effectively. As the State of NJ inches closer to adequately funding the state aid formula, Collingswood and Oaklyn have maintained stability and consistency of services to the school community. However, the pandemic has introduced a series of additional expenditures that must be planned and budgeted for.

In years past, Collingswood offered a comprehensive science, technology, engineering, arts, and math (STEAM) program during several weeks in the summer. There are, however, barriers to participation in this program – cost, transportation, and scheduling. Through Title I, Sharp School and Collingswood High School offer several programs that expand learning opportunities beyond the school day and the school year. The middle school participated in an Arts in Education grant that also expanded learning time for some of our most underserved students. Due to the damaging effects brought on by COVID-19, summer programming will need to look different. School leaders will meet throughout the Spring to identify the range of program offerings. Much of this year’s summer programming will focus on providing opportunities for disengaged students to reconnect with schools. In terms of grant funding, there are additional funds being made available to support the important work thanks to the federal Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act that was enacted on December 27, 2020 (ESSER II) and the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 signed into law on March 11, 2021 (ESSER III).

ESSER II funds (\$1.2M) are being provided to address the areas most impacted by the disruption and closure of schools caused by COVID-19. Areas include support for the broader learning ecosystem, such as evidence-based strategies to cultivate a growth mindset in students, professional learning for educators in the use of formative assessments, and the use of extended instructional time to effectively scaffold students’ learning, as well integrate parents and educators into a multi-tiered system of supports. The district will use available funds to support robust summer programming, staff development, and

infrastructure. Separate funds (\$82k) were made available to support accelerated learning during the summer. In addition, funds (\$45k) have also been made available to support building or enhancing a continuum of school-based mental health services for students, in coordination with existing county and local services, and support for educators.

ESSER III funds (\$2.1M) are being provided to address the impact of significant interrupted instruction; preparation for physical reopening; to test, repair, and upgrade projects to improve air quality in school buildings; to purchase education technology; to provide mental health supports; as well as other activities authorized by existing law. The district will use available funds to support facilities upgrades and safety improvements.

To address the reporting and compliance needs of existing grants (Title, IDEA, Preschool) as well as new federal grants (ESSER II, ESSER III), it is recommended that a new position be created. Included in the new district administrative structure, the proposed Instructional Supervisor for Grants and Special Projects will support the needs of all federal, state, and local grants as well as coordinate professional development and program compliance district-wide. This new role will work across multiple departments and be responsible for the coordination of effort needed to ensure fiscal and programmatic compliance to funding guidelines.

It is further recommended that the district re-evaluate its school site budgeting processes and shift to an equity-focused student-based budgeting approach for subsequent years. Student-Based Budgeting (SBB) allocates dollars to schools based on the number of enrolled students, where each student receives a funding “weight” based on need. This model can allow districts to increase equity, transparency, and flexibility. Annual priorities are established and therefore the budget must be re-assessed each year to ensure that funding to support students is maximized, operational efficiencies are explored, there are minimal disruptions to personnel, and spending is aligned to district priorities. As a school community, we must confront the “Triple Squeeze”.

1. Unsustainable cost structures that increase automatically and take funds away from improving instruction. (Deferred building maintenance, special education placements, cost of benefits).
2. Higher bar for student learning and greater student needs, which require new strategies and new investments.
3. Flat or decreasing revenue. (Declining local, state, and federal funding; decreased enrollment)

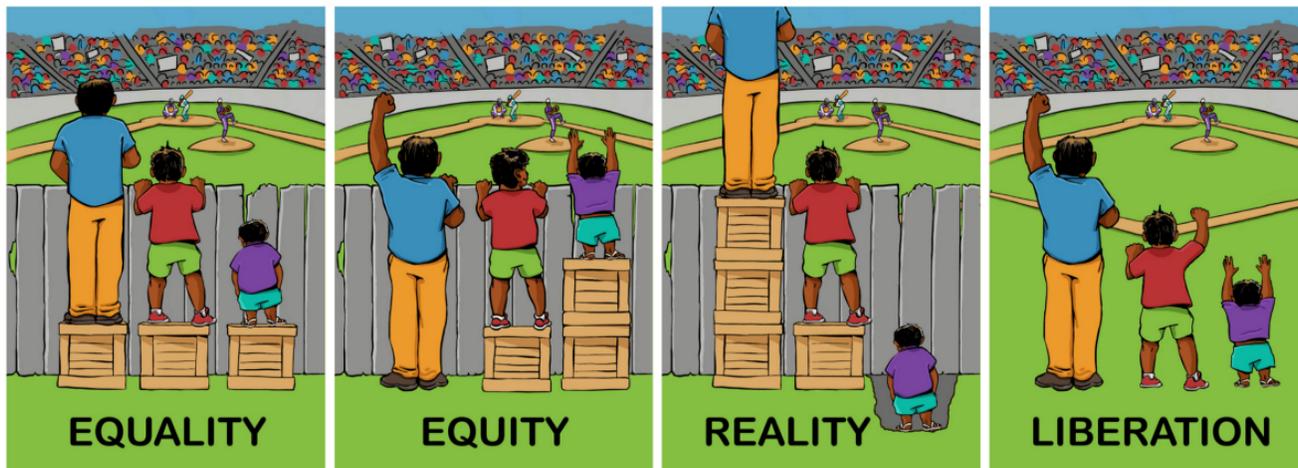
It is also recommended that the District conduct a Special Education targeted department review and program audit. The District needs to have a better understanding on the current utilization of Instructional Assistants, program evaluation of out of district placements, monthly Child Study Team performance, collaborative structures in place with Related Service Providers, external partnerships, and summer program needs and staff responsibilities. Additional discussion will take place to review the program of studies for special education students prek-12. Ongoing communication and progress monitoring will allow the District to make strategic changes throughout the year; specifically referencing budget development, staffing needs, and programmatic changes. Recommendations from the review will highlight how Collingswood and Oaklyn Public Schools can more effectively organize its structures, systems, and processes to better support the delivery of services to students with learning differences.

**SOLIDIFYING DISTRICT PRIORITIES: Learning about the values, norms, and expectations of the community and how the district’s initiatives are prioritized. Reduce “priority overload” and focus on high leverage strategies determined to have the greatest impact on student outcomes.**

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## **EDUCATIONAL EQUITY**

The district has been working to develop an educational equity plan that involves identifying the district and school factors (policy and culture), classroom factors (curriculum and instructional practices), and student factors (student engagement and voice) that impact the achievement of equity in an educational setting. Throughout the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years, members of the District Equity Committee worked to identify solutions. (pre-pandemic) For the 2020-21 school year, members of the District Equity Council have been working on how to achieve equity from an educator’s perspective.



Source: The Center for Story Based Strategy

Equity Council members have also been working with faculty from Rowan University to explore key topics around equity and social justice in education. Members were divided into the following subgroups: Opportunity & Access; Curriculum/Instruction/Assessment; Culture/Climate/Relationships; Community/Family/Communications; and Educator Supports. In addition, doctoral students from Rowan University conducted a series of equity-focused research projects including an equity audit. Due to pandemic-related disruption, it is recommended that the Equity Council work continue for the 2021-22 school year as an advisory component of the strategic planning process. This core group of educators will prove to be valuable advocates as we seek to build institutional knowledge and capacity towards achieving educational equity in Collingswood and Oaklyn Public Schools.

## STRATEGIC PLANNING

During the entry plan process, it became evident that the district is ready to begin long-term strategic planning. Returning to full-time in-person learning will be the push needed to re-engage the school community in the planning process. Therefore, it is recommended that strategic planning begin in the Fall with the Equity Council work serving as the foundation for the plan. Given the time constraints and sensitive nature of operating schools during the pandemic, it is recommended that the district invest in a facilitator to support the long-term strategic planning process. Based on professionalism and competence, it is recommended that the following organizations be considered for this important task: NJ School Boards Association (NJSBA), NJ Association of School Administrators (NJASA), or Hazard, Young, Attea, & Associates (HYA).

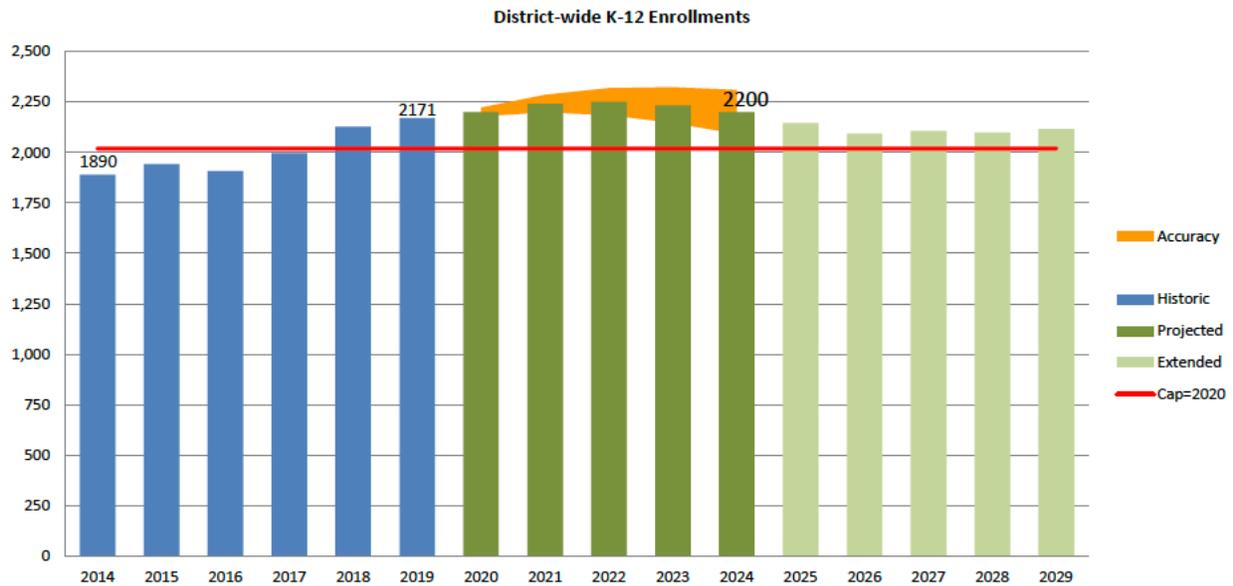
## INFRASTRUCTURE CHALLENGES

Facilities and maintenance needs have been an ongoing challenge; despite having a proficient, professional, and responsive Buildings and Grounds Team. The 3-year Comprehensive Maintenance Plan (2019-22) is being implemented in addition to ongoing support directly associated with COVID-19 phased mitigation and prevention procedures. The Technology Team has also worked diligently to support instruction and meet the technical needs of students, families, and educators in the remote and hybrid learning environments.

The school district's Long-Range Facilities Plan (LRFP) was submitted back in 2005 and has continued to be updated with the completion of each capital improvement project. LRFPs demand that school districts re-examine and strengthen their long-term planning for educational adequacy in maintaining updated facilities. It also provides school districts an opportunity to work closely with municipal, community, and other groups to ensure that capital resources enhance the overall quality of the municipality as well as the neighborhoods each facility serves. The NJ Department of Education is in the process of updating the system that support facilities planning and details will be forthcoming. Facilities and routine maintenance can be highly variable and therefore it is recommended that additional funding be encumbered to account for such volatility based on the age of some of our school buildings.

The school district's Demographic and Enrollment Report was completed in 2019 (pre-pandemic) by Sundance Associates. The study highlighted the number of students district-wide at 2,171. It was projected that enrollment would decrease by 29 students in the next 5 years. Elementary enrollments would increase by 33 students, Middle School would decrease by

125 students, and High School would increase by 121 students. Year by Year grade level projections were analyzed to help determine the sufficiency of classroom counts for the future.



Source: Collingswood Public Schools Fall 2019 Enrollment Projection

Due to the unforeseen impact of the pandemic, it is recommended that the district has projected enrollments re-assessed and adjusted. Anecdotal data suggests that there may be a slight increase to the current enrollment projections from 2019.

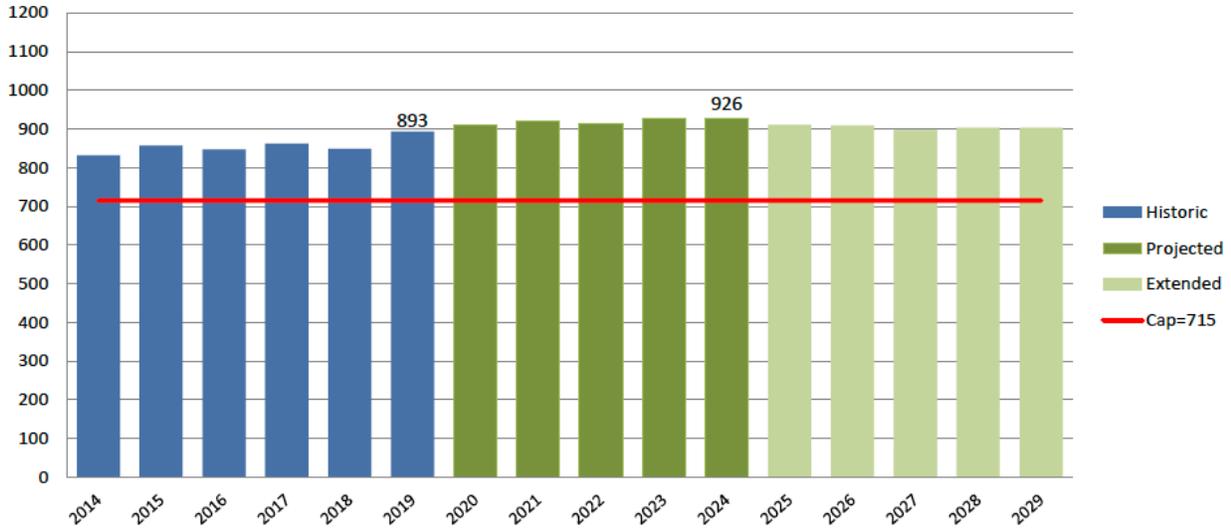
Collingswood School District  
**Elementary PK-Grade 5 Enrollments**

	Year	PK									PK-5 TOTAL	Period to Period	
		PK	SCSE	K	1	2	3	4	5	SE		Average	Change
<b>Historic</b>	2014	51	4	145	116	153	122	117	115	9	<b>832</b>		
	2015	40	6	140	140	118	154	122	119	18	<b>857</b>		
	2016	44	8	117	132	133	120	146	125	22	<b>847</b>		
	2017	57	4	129	118	132	129	127	146	20	<b>862</b>	857	
	2018	61	3	140	122	114	130	123	123	33	<b>849</b>		
	2019	87	0	153	133	119	118	141	123	19	<b>893</b>		61 7.3%
<b>Projected</b>	2020	93	0	138	147	131	119	119	141	23	<b>912</b>		
	2021	100	0	148	133	145	131	120	119	23	<b>919</b>		
	2022	88	0	131	143	131	145	132	121	23	<b>913</b>	919	
	2023	92	0	136	126	140	131	146	132	24	<b>927</b>		
	2024	92	0	137	131	123	140	132	147	23	<b>926</b>		33 3.6%
<b>Extended</b>	2025	92	0	137	132	129	124	142	132	23	<b>910</b>		
	2026	92	0	137	132	129	129	125	142	23	<b>909</b>		
	2027	92	0	137	132	129	130	130	125	23	<b>897</b>	905	
	2028	92	0	137	132	129	130	131	131	23	<b>903</b>		
	2029	92	0	137	132	129	130	131	131	23	<b>904</b>		-22 -2.4%

Source: Collingswood Public Schools Fall 2019 Enrollment Projection

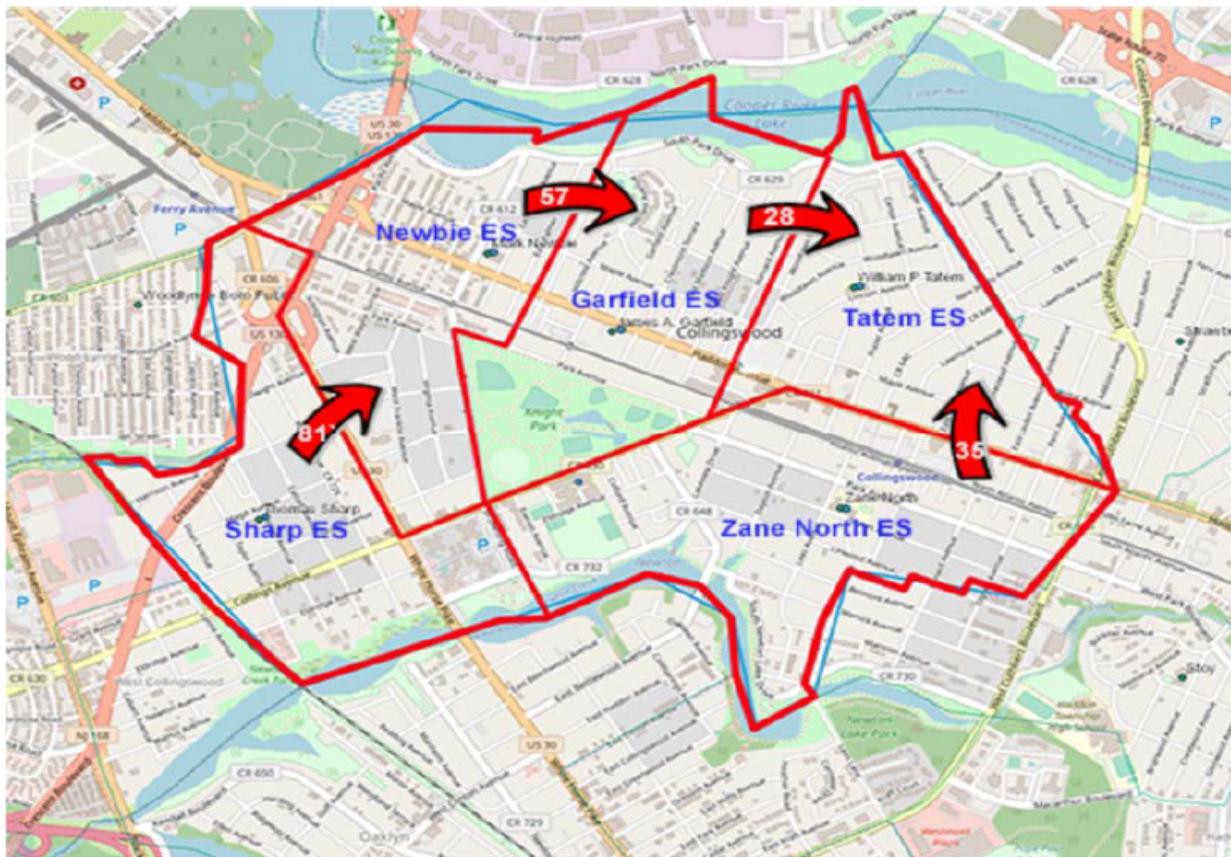
As of April 2021, district enrollment is 2,207 and exceeds the district capacity of 2,020 in all projection years. Elementary School enrollments are over NJ DOE District Practice capacity now and in all projection years. During the historic period (2014-19) enrollments increased to 893 students with a cap of 715. The projected period (2020-24) enrollments will continue to increase by 33 students to a peak of 926 students with a cap of 926.

### Elementary PK-Gr 5 Enrollments



Source: Collingswood Public Schools Fall 2019 Enrollment Projection

A Redistricting Plan was suggested based on grade level each at Garfield, Newbie, Sharp, and Zane North, and (2) grade levels at Tatem. Strategies include: existing condition, re-balance only, or moves; with (5) potential redistricting models. Further discussion is needed to explore the viability of options presented related to school facility utilization, diversity of population, and equitable access to instructional programs.

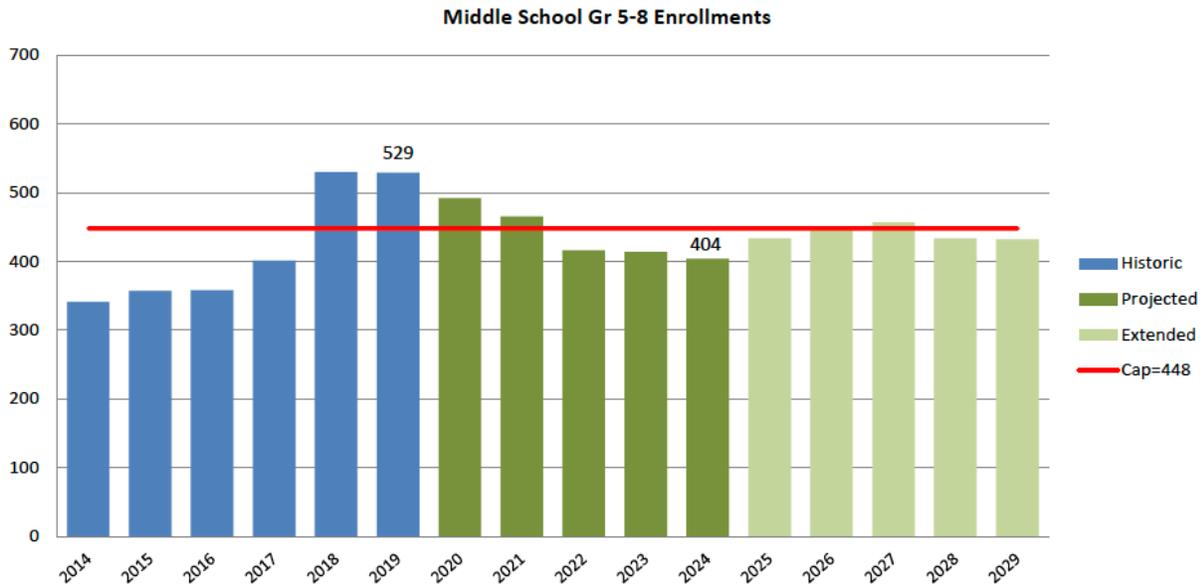


Source: Collingswood Public Schools Fall 2019 Enrollment Projection

Another consideration is the successful acquisition of additional property to increase overall capacity of district elementary schools while providing Collingswood families additional programming options for their children. Existing real estate in

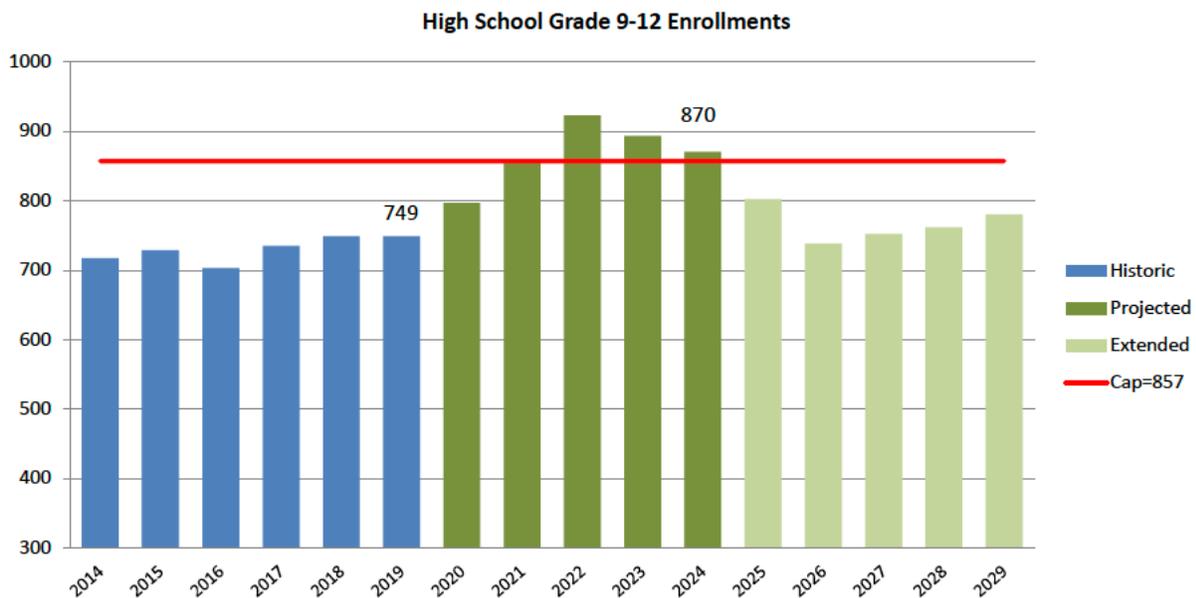
Collingswood is limited and new construction is not attainable without additional taxpayer support. Therefore, it is recommended that the District work closely with the Borough to identify funding sources and potential properties to renovate that will meet the standards set forth by the NJ Department of Education for student usage. Discussion will be ongoing.

During the historic period (2014-19) enrollments increased 188 students to 529. In 2018, 123 new students from Oaklyn joined Collingswood Middle School. In the projection period (2020-24) enrollments will decrease by 125 students to 404 students. Middle School enrollments exceed NJ DOE District Practice capacity in 2 years of the 5-year projection. Future discussions will need to take place with regards to maintaining momentum and stability at the middle school despite projected declines in enrollment and reduced annual school budgets.



Source: Collingswood Public Schools Fall 2019 Enrollment Projection

During the historic period (2014-19) enrollments increased 32 students to 749. In the projection period (2020-24) enrollments will increase by 121 students to a peak of 870 students. High School enrollments exceed NJ DOE District Practice capacity in 3 years of the 5-year projection. Future discussions will need to take place with regards to optimal space utilization and academic programming at the high school to account for the increases in projected enrollment.



Source: Collingswood Public Schools Fall 2019 Enrollment Projection

## **ATHLETICS FACILITIES**

In 2017, the Collingswood Board of Education approved (2) Community conversations to discuss infrastructure concerns. This provided an opportunity to engage the community and seek feedback prior to the formal proposal to bring to voters in a bond referendum. The greatest level of interest was in the Stadium Project and the Athletic Fields.



The current athletic fields do not adequately prepare our students for high level competition. In a sense, our students are at a competitive disadvantage when they travel to other schools with updated facilities. Neighboring districts and conference competitors generally use artificial turf fields. It is recommended that further discussion and exploration of athletic facilities and the impact on the community take place.

**ORGANIZING DEPARTMENTS AND RESOURCES:** Learning about district investments and resources allocated based on student needs. Using a transparent and reciprocal process to leverage the strengths of the district. Accelerating student progress by supporting the efforts of our educators and reinforcing positive school culture.

Beginning in the Fall, the District will be engaging in a long-term community-based strategic planning process. The re-emergence of students and staff provides an opportunity for the school community to actively participate in discussions on how we transition to the next normal. Utilizing a site-based approach, we will provide multiple opportunities for families and community members to participate (survey, remote, and in-person). The District's previous work from the District Equity Committee (2018-20) and the District Equity Council (2020-21) will serve as the foundation for the development process.



Source: ICANN, An Introduction to Strategic Planning

The purpose of strategic planning is to engage in a thoughtful process that links the values, mission, and vision of the school district with a set of strategies and actions designed to set the course for the future. A well-designed strategic planning process is aligned to district priorities, is communicated broadly, makes improvement the focus, and promotes sustainability. The process must be dynamic, responsive, and focused on what is reasonable and manageable. The outcomes are a system of supports, in which schools, parents, and students are provided with the necessary resources for academic success.