

Somerville Borough School District, Somerset County



The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) Lighthouse District Initiative recognizes districts that have demonstrated measurable progress across diverse groups of learners. The NJDOE is proud to welcome the Somerville Borough School District to the second cohort of Lighthouse Districts.

Dr. Tim Teehan and the Board of Education in Somerville collaborated with the staff, students and community to set Vision 2020, which focuses on three strategic themes: building cultural competence; preparing for college and career; and growing professional development opportunities. Because each is important to student success, school climate and culture are critical areas the district leverages to meet its longterm vision for improved student outcomes. Every year, each school building in the district conducts a school climate and culture survey. They use the information to gauge where they are finding success and which areas they need to improve. Somerville's social media hashtag is #Allin4theVille. "Allin4theVille" means that everyone is all in for the students in every way, every day. The district accomplishes this through the purposeful empowerment of its staff and working as a team to achieve desired goals.

Somerville staff have many in-district professional development opportunities. Educators can be involved with the hiring process for open positions; write curriculum; create teacher leader passion projects; join various committees; grow professionally by sharing their expertise with colleagues; and openly and honestly discuss ways to improve the district and offerings for students. Everyone's input is valued to help the district meet their collective vision.

College and career readiness is a priority throughout the district. In both the elementary and middle school, students participate in small groups to improve self-esteem, positive peer interactions and other skills that are deemed important by the teachers. Somerville High School has a guidance counselor dedicated to college and career. The College and Career counselor and the guidance counseling team arrange on-site college visits, provide scholarship information and support, share resources about the various branches of the military, arrange apprenticeships and internships, identify volunteer opportunities and disseminate part-time job openings. The district also uses personalized learning plans to better understand students' current paths and future goals.

Somerville also promotes inclusivity. Special education students are encouraged to interact with peers outside of their classroom and this has helped them to feel more connected to the school as a whole. A highlight is the district-created, unified bowling team that has a mix of special education and non-special education students.

Seven years ago, the district created its first Digital Data Wall. The shared data provides a longitudinal view of each student, which makes it easy to identify progress and areas of need. The data serves as a compass to student learning and student needs in an effort to help every student achieve success. This summer they will begin to analyze data to create a plan to help frame goals for the next five years.

Somerville Borough School District Demographic Information

Grades Served: Pre-K to 12

Number of Schools: 3

Total Enrollment: 2,357

Economically Disadvantaged: 30.3%

Students with Disabilities: 16.5%

English Learners: 4.5%

Ask Somerville Borough to Share Their Story

- 1) Setting a strategic vision
- 2) School culture and climate
- 3) Teacher professional growth
- 4) College and career guidance
- 5) Analyzing student data

Contact Information

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