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# Plan for Lakewood High School

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A Plan for Lakewood

Lakewood, New Jersey has a population approaching 100,000. It is perhaps the fastest growing and most vibrant city in the United States. Yet, its schools are in decline. No outsider, no professor of education, and no researcher will completely solve the problem. Lakewood is unique. The economic, political, and moral vitality of Lakewood, with its world renown for learning, is not at all focused on the Lakewood School District, but on its independent district, which is growing at a staggering eighteen percent annually. One thousand new homes are built and 2,000 babies are born each year to families who have *never heard* of any of its public schools, *or even know a single student attending*.

It is time for that to change. It is time for new vision at Lakewood School District. It is time for new leadership.

I present a program using resources already available and well within current appropriations, to make the public district meaningful to the majority of taxpayers and voters. The vast majority will continue to send their children to the independent district, but they will know of Lakewood High School and they will know some of its students. When all residents of Lakewood become stakeholders in our success, students will gain a new sense of belonging, a prerequisite that research has proven to impact academic achievement, and consequently improve State test scores.

## Civic Trust

The mandate of a public school is to create *civic trust*. Civic trust begins with respect for the laws, grows with an understanding of our constitution, and is driven by the awe of doing that which is right. The civic trust is not built upon brute force or on vocal strength, but upon the reasoned force of argument, always within, and ideally pushing the edges of, the legal structure. The civic trust exists between students, between teachers and students, between parents and teachers, and between the school and the whole community. Diversity of association is as old as America and we are strong because we do not all think the same, *but it is the law that binds us all together as a nation*.

Administrators of a public school command a solemn respect upon students, parents, teachers and all citizens because they embody the public trust, not unlike the administration of government. That is not to deny that the school as an organization is secondary to instruction and instruction is subordinate to the welfare of the child, but when the leadership wins the respect of parents and students, it creates pride among students and parents. The vice-principals of Lakewood High School combine the diverse capacities of nurture, toughness and STRIVE and enjoy that respect. I seek their advice and admire their leadership, and am humbled even to offer my name for the opening position, which if rejected, I would gladly instruct under the administration of any one of them.

## Plan of Action

### Vision of Civic Trust

Understanding of the law is the common bond in a diverse society. The discourse of the school community is in the language of our constitutional principals, the law, and the fundamental values on which they are founded.

The school is a positive environment that reinforces each child's worth based on the content of his or her character giving students self-esteem and respect, attitudes necessary for success.

Art classes will paint murals and displays reinforcing positive character traits.

Whole school assemblies will began with penetrating references of history and government. Inspirational messages will be posted, announced and showcased.

Diversity begins by appreciating different cultures, but its end is seeing people as individuals.

### Instruction of diverse student body

As teaching is the highest form of learning, juniors and seniors who have done well academically will serve as classroom assistants to make differentiated instruction a real possibility. Lakewood High School will create an ambitious and accredited student service program.

The student body will be presented recent studies about the brain and learning. Research has shown that students make significant gains in academic achievement when they are made aware of the hard science that proves that they can improve their intelligence and ability.

The highly-qualified principal is an instructional leader who has to ability to, and at times, will teach almost every subject, either as a full course or as a guest instructor, stressing to both faculty and students the need to find interdisciplinary connections that make learning authentic, and to aid him in keeping in touch with the challenges of the classroom in order to better collaborate with teachers.

The highly-qualified principal is a teacher of all subjects so that he can work as a colleague within all departments.

The principal will make and distribute a general consolidation of weekly submitted faculty lesson plans so that teachers reinforce all learning and students make meaningful connections between disciplines.

Teachers will use problem solving approaches and open-ended questions to elicit higher order student thinking. Teachers will continue to walk around classrooms to monitor,

assist, modify and differentiate instruction. They will reflect and adjust, and frequently assess achievement of clear behavioral objectives.

Whereas we all have diverse interests and capacities, we all believe that we excel at citizenship. Students will surely exceed expectations when teachers engage them in authentic discussions probing the civic trust.

The highly-qualified principal encourages a culture of collegiality, collaborating with faculty to meet student needs and make instruction more effective by compiling data to correlate instruction with student achievement.

The highly-qualified principal is an instructional leader who is visible in the classroom and collaborates with faculty for continuous school improvement.

Students and teachers will be in the classroom from bell to bell, 180 days a year.

### Management

Intermittent attendance has seriously undermined the academic climate of many classrooms and the school. Our truancy plan is inadequate. Attendance is not taken efficiently and parents of students missing single periods are not always notified. Parents are often not at home. We will improve our system of immediate notification.

We will coordinate with public library staff and managers at Shop Rite to observe truant students during school hours. We will explain to parents that truancy is illegal and discourage family excursions during the school year. We will work together with Lakewood Police and Ocean County Family Court to *vigorously* enforce truancy laws and to hold students and parents accountable. We can and we will do better.

We will provide in-house security without the need to hire new personnel by increasing the number and visibility of hall monitoring teachers and staff and providing them with walkie-talkies to communicate with one another, with security, the resource officer, and administrators, to present a safe learning environment.

We will personally work with members of the township committee and the police chief to provide a safe school and a safe Lakewood.

We will correlate student identification numbers to a random sequence of numbers (readily available in back of statistics texts) in the assignment of lockers. This will ensure a random configuration of students together in the hall between classes, before and after school.

We will collect data on consistency of discipline policy. Do unexcused infractions and punishments correlate positively? Review and modify guidelines as determined by data, conceiving all possible exceptions and consequences of implementation. Set timetable and questions for routine review of data and re-evaluation.

We will stand in the cafeteria before school to make sure students finish breakfast before going to first period.

We will not tolerate low level delinquency such as cutting in lunch line and discourage the taking hold of the property of another.

We will assign teachers the same classrooms for as many periods as possible to facilitate efficient and excellent instruction, and a classroom setting that reflects student work, curriculum content, values and personal style.

We will work with Central Office to allow the most cost effective purchasing of supplies and texts. Rigid procedures make faculty and staff apathetic of substantial savings, lowering morale and wasting taxpayer money, violating the public trust. Stakeholders who buy into a school often look for bargains when they buy for the school.

The principal is ultimately accountable for scheduling, computer operations, and coordination with local police and for school security. Lack of resource allocation is not an acceptable excuse for any systemic failure. Even when dependent upon others outside the school, the highly-qualified principal continuously advocates and is on top of events concerning the welfare of his school.

### Community

Lakewood High School will actively recruit and prefer Lakewood residents to create a community of stakeholders, who care for our students because Lakewood is their home, and who will work responsibly with allocated resources and an eye toward thrift because they are public servants accountable to their neighbors, almost all of whom struggle to pay their property taxes.

Lakewood High School will hold a *Cinco de Mayo* Celebration, since almost all of our Mexican students, who come from the State of Puebla, need to perceive a safe and welcoming school culture.

We will send out a newsletter to target the general community on issues such as education and civic responsibility, with the aim of to making Lakewood a better place for all its citizens. The two districts will speak in terms of values that we share in common renewing our civic trust.

We will establish a Construction Trades track to teach our students the skills necessary for the plurality of jobs in Lakewood. We will reach out to local contractors and businesses to make them proud to hire Lakewood High School graduates and to employ them on internship programs after-school and in the summer.

Lakewood is famous for its efforts to eradicate *loshen hara*. Lakewood High School will learn from and work with the yeshiva community and its esteemed foundations in designing a program that will stop students from *talking junk*.

Teachers will be allowed to work after school for the Lakewood independent district, whose students deserve a professionally trained educator to teach secular studies and to instill in the vast majority of children in Lakewood the broader values of citizenship in our great nation.

### Ethics

Teachers care for their students. Students are given many chances to succeed.

Teachers and administrators are models of ideals and morality, who are trusted by families and empowered by the law to succeed in their pedagogic vision. The principal does not celebrate popular culture, sanction improper dress, or use profanity, not to endorse values that ought not to be approved.

The role of principal is less important than the role of teachers, and both are less important than the role of students, which we all are. Therefore, there is no such thing as a principal compromising the organization, breaking the trust of teachers, or sacrificing the welfare of students for his own career, because the highly-qualified principal can always go back to teaching, which he loves, and he always is learning, which he loves even more.

### Political

We will work with the Asbury Park Press for positive coverage of Lakewood High School. We will dispel popular and inaccurate perceptions by inviting reporters away from the Board of Education and into the High School to observe our success and our care in the classroom.

We will bring school board members into the building frequently. We will personally call them at work, speak to them in *shul*, and find them in yeshiva or at home to keep them informed and bring them to graduation.

A positive political environment and a more common sense of community in town will have a lasting impact on all students in Lakewood.