

Annual Report

Middle States Strategic Planning Process

2022/2023: Year 1 Review



The mission of the South Bergen Jointure Commission is to unlock the potential of every student. As a leading educational provider, we will focus on the development of each student's social, emotional, and academic needs. By fostering an environment that is supportive and challenging, we will empower students to maximize their independence and potential in becoming fulfilled and productive members of their community.

www.njsbjc.org
201-393-0475

  [wearethesbjc](https://www.instagram.com/wearethesbjc)

About the SBJC

South Bergen Jointure Commission is a special education school district with locations spread throughout northern New Jersey. With 350+ students and an average class size of six, the SBJC prepares students with exceptional abilities to live productive, independent, and meaningful lives.

At the SBJC, our students come first and foremost, and we meet the diverse needs of all students by providing individualized learning experiences focused on maximizing their independence. The 300 staff members who work with our students every day are committed to our students’ success, and each member of our team—whether paraprofessional, related service provider, or teacher—plays an important role in ensuring our students make the achievements they need to move to the next stage of their academic career.

Our vision centers around ensuring that our students are learning in their least restrictive environment, and that means we help them develop the skills needed to unlock their potential. From our curriculum to our facilities to our athletic program and our No Barriers initiative, all of our programming focuses on giving every student the tools needed to be the best version of themselves.

We serve as a lead agency for the purposes of creating consortiums or cooperative enterprises. The SBJC provides services to participating school districts with an emphasis on shared services in the following areas:

Special Education Classrooms • Curriculum • Outreach & Related Services • Transportation
Professional Development • Home Programming • Students Transitioning to Adult Responsibilities
Extended School Year

Our Mission

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Our Core Values

- We believe our students come first and foremost.** We meet the diverse needs of all students by providing individualized learning experiences focused on maximizing their independence.
- We believe that every member of our team plays an important role.** We are a diverse group of life-long learners who understand that professional growth and development of staff is necessary to ensure student success.
- We believe in the power of our students’ families and communities.** We value the role that SBJC families and communities play in our students’ learning experiences. The strong home/school collaboration we have developed assists with the generalization and sustainability of our students’ education.
- We believe that our schools are safe, supportive, and challenging learning environments.** We support and encourage our students to take calculated risks, seek challenges, and break barriers.

Our Profile of an SBJC Graduate

SBJC Graduates will have been exposed to experiences that:	SBJC Graduates will view themselves as:	SBJC Graduates will, to the best of their ability, know how to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Challenge them to recognize and strive toward their full potential.Cultivate critical skills needed to persevere through life challenges.Encourage them to build and maintain meaningful relationships.Provide meaningful life opportunities in the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Having the skills, tools, and experiences needed to navigate their world.Self-confident individuals who are able to achieve their goals and advocate on their own behalf.Positive contributors in their community who engage in opportunities for community service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Communicate their needs to those around them.Manage stress using techniques centered around mindfulness.Be problem solvers.Use empathy to understand and value diversity.Use technologies and access resources for the improvement of their lives.



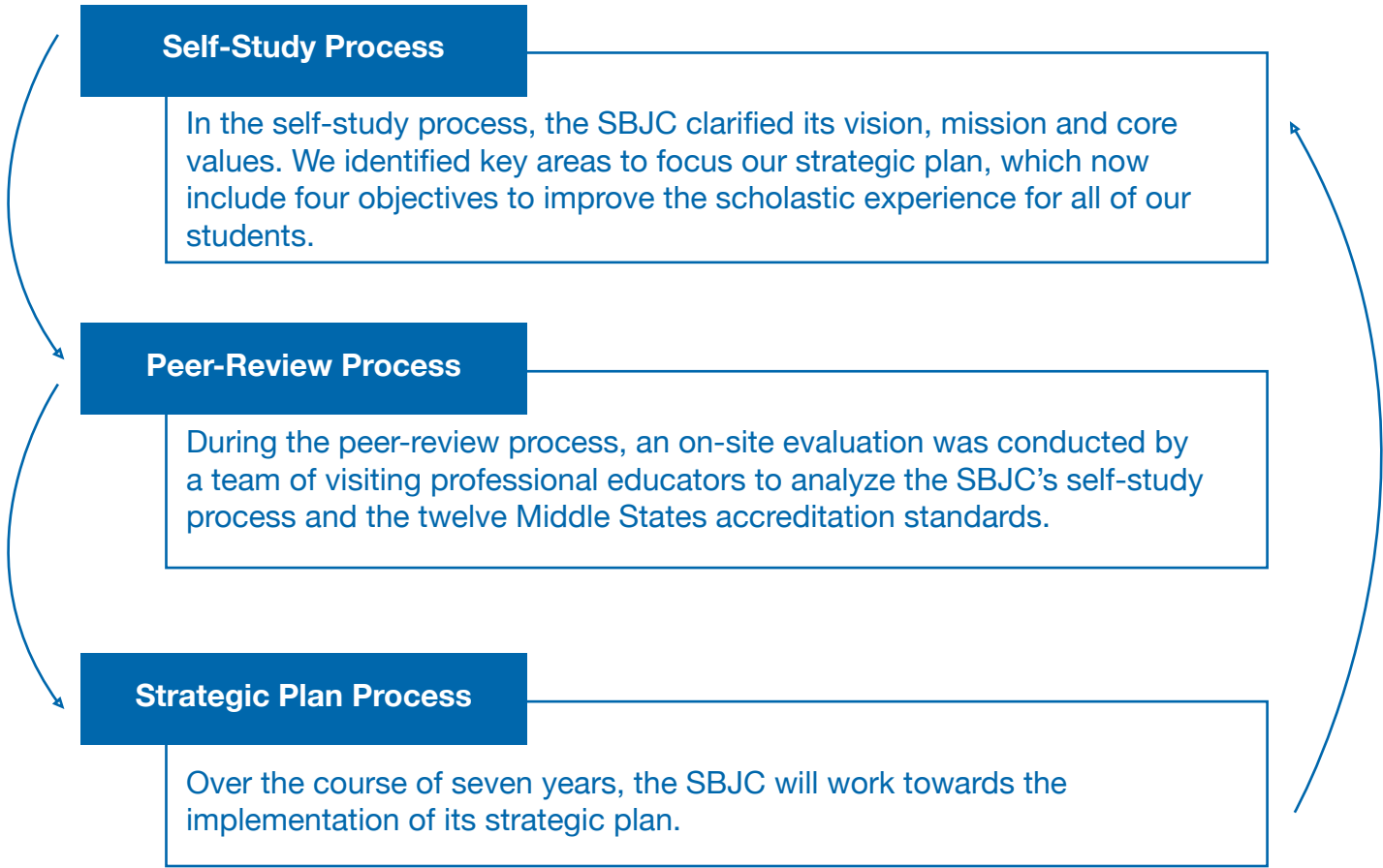
Introduction to the Middle States Process

The South Bergen Jointure Commission is accredited by the Middle States Association Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools (MSA-CESs) using the Achieving Excellence System-Wide protocol.

Starting in 2019, the SBJC underwent a three-year self-study process that involved multiple levels of school and district committee work centered on improving our delivery of services to students with exceptional needs. Staff and community volunteers joined our SBJC Planning Team. The first step of the accreditation process was to analyze the district’s mission and collective values to develop our core foundational documents seen on the next page.

Also through this accreditation process, the SBJC has developed a strategic plan that will drive all of our district initiatives around one unifying mission and purpose: unlocking the potential of every student in order for them to live full and independent lives. This seven-year plan will allow us to achieve a laser-like focus on meeting each and every one of our students’ individual goals, while also building a model of collaboration, voice-and-choice, and sustainability. The purpose of this annual report is to share with all of our stakeholders the achievements made by our district in accomplishing the objectives set out in our strategic plan.

The SBJC is currently in the strategic plan process of accreditation. In 2029, we will restart the accreditation cycle beginning with the self-study process.



SBJC Committees

After successfully completing year one of our seven-year strategic plan, we are excited to showcase and celebrate the accomplishments of our four objective committees. Their dedicated efforts have propelled the SBJC in becoming an exemplar of special education.

If you are interested in joining one of these committees, please reach out to Ashley Vaughan avaughan@njsbjc.org or Shane Miller smiller@njsbjc.org.

District Planning & Implementation Team

Our planning team participates actively in the ongoing review of the progress made towards implementing our Strategic Planning goals. The SBJC Planning Team members are:

Lynda Barton	Reji George	Shane Miller	Mark Raum	Jamie Stevens
Tom Barton	Chris Hughes	Mary Payoczkowski	Lauren Rosicki	Ashley Vaughan
Holly Ehle	Cheryl Kavanagh	Lorraine Rake	Scott Rossig	Judi White
Elizabeth Forte	Michael Kuchar			

Objective Committees

These four committees are made up of over 50 SBJC staff and community members from all across the district who have volunteered their time to achieve these district goals.

LRE	Professional Development	Communication	Functional Living Skills
Hailey Barteck	Ranya Dabbagh	Corey Bladzinski	Lynda Barton
Julie Callaghan	Megan Farrell-Ingham	Kimberly Bohichik	Tom Barton
Holly Ehle	Andrea Frankel	Erica Colombini	Deborah Chilelli-Boru
Michelle Keim	Reji George	Elizabeth Forte	Kristin DelRosso
Roe Licata	Jacqueline Lindenau	Janinne Kelly	Sheryl Duren
Dinahlee Rodriguez	Christine McLeod	Erika King	Megan Farrell-Ingham
Lauren Rosicki	Mary Payoczkowski	Shane Miller	Chris Hughes
Siobhan Smith	Deborah Podwin	Lorraine Rake	Cheryl Kavanagh
Hillary Sobol	Mark Raum	Julia Scozzafava	Tai Kelly
Jeff McGowan	Jacqueline Rossmell		Ellen Kriley
Gianna Gonzalez	Kathy Tennant		Joanna Lachcik
	Elizabeth Thariath		Cheryl Lupica
	Danielle Trancucci		Bernadette Palpallatoc
	Ashley Vaughan		Scott Rossig
	Jennnifer Winand		Kathy Tennant
			Nardine Tobia
			Melissa Tocci
			Jessica Wagner
			Kellie Weiss
			Judi White

We define community access as the literal physical access to environments external to the school and home. Community access is an important part of the life of our students, as it provides access to recreation tasks, social opportunities and enables them to develop skills and competencies. This criterion determines at what level the student is able to access the local community.

Objective #2

Professional Development

This plan will provide the district with direction in establishing the use of a model that supports the professional growth of our faculty and staff. The plan focuses on the use of data to drive the selection of professional development offerings, and will also focus on improving the training model we use for all of our new hires.

2022/2023 Highlights

Development of SBJC Professional Development Overview and PLC Overview Documents: To establish a shared understanding of the district’s current professional development practices, two documents were created: the SBJC: Professional Development Overview and the Professional Learning Community (PLC) Overview. These documents outline the existing practices and will serve as a baseline for future improvements and strategic planning.

District Evaluation Advisory Committee (DEAC) Meeting: In April 2023, a DEAC meeting was conducted to gather insights and perspectives as to what constitutes effective professional development. The meeting aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of existing professional development initiatives, identify areas for improvement, and foster collaboration across campuses. The input obtained during this meeting will inform future decision-making processes.

Development of New District Surveys: To gather valuable feedback from staff members, three new district surveys were developed and distributed in June 2023. These surveys include:

- **End-of-Year Professional Development Survey:** This survey aims to assess the effectiveness and impact of professional development activities conducted throughout the year. It provides an opportunity for staff members to share their experiences, suggestions, and areas for improvement.
- **New Hire Training Survey:** This survey targets newly hired staff members and seeks feedback on their onboarding and training experiences. It aims to identify strengths and weaknesses in the training process to ensure an effective and supportive orientation for new employees.
- **New Hire Survey:** The New Hire Survey is designed to gather information regarding the specific needs of new employees. This information will help the district tailor support systems to meet the unique requirements of new staff members.

Research Process: To further enhance professional development practices, a research process was initiated. The research focuses on two key questions:

1. What are the most effective models of professional development?
2. What models do similar districts have in place for providing professional development?

This research aims to gather evidence-based insights, best practices, and innovative approaches employed by other districts. It will help the district make informed decisions regarding the design and implementation of professional development initiatives moving forward.

Professional Development Offerings, 2022-2023

Date	Training/Certificate	Trainer/Facilitator
July 2022	Preventing Academic Failure (PAF): Teacher Training	Amy Linden & Kaarina Bauerle, PAF
Sept. 2022	Savvas-MyView Literacy: Initial Program Training	Sara Anderson, Savvas Learning Company
	Teachers Pay Teacher (TPT): School Access Basics	Nadia Nobrega, Teachers Pay Teachers
	IXL: Elevate I	Andrea Welch, IXL
	Informed Intentionality: Fostering a Strong Sense of Community	Teaching Strategies
Oct. 2022	Preference Assessments and Contingent Reinforcement	Dr. Katharine Croce, Felician University Dr. Theoni Mantzoros, Felician University
	Behavior Department Meeting	Dr. John Burke, Felician University
	Augmentative and Alternative Communication in the Classroom	Deanna Ketschke & Jennifer Jaslow
	Natural Environment Teaching	Jeff McGowan
Nov. 2022	Functions, Reinforcement and HIB	Tiffany Hughes, Claudia Balestier and Mike Fenner
	Best Practices in Teaching Foundational Skills	Dr. Nissa Van Etten, Autumn Bailey and Lisa Squadere, Central Reach
	Introduction to ABLLS-R	Central Reach Institute
	Sensory Integration Training (Sensory Gym)	Ellen Kriley, Bari-Sue Douglas and Shital Patel
	Savvas- MyView Literacy: Follow-Up Training	Virginia Kovolsk, Savvas Learning Company
	Best Practices in the Preschool Classroom	Kimberly Bohichik and Christine McLeod
	Introduction to AFLS	Central Reach Institute
	Informed Intentionality: Choosing Materials That Promote Content Learning	Teaching Strategies
	Summit Professional Education: Individual Choice	Summit Professional Education
	Promethean Board Training	Richard Ruggiero, Promethean
	ABA Program Book Review and Training	Siobhan Smith
	Behavior Department Meeting	Dr. John Burke, Felician University
	Typetastic: Program Overview Training	Ruth Marasco, Typetastic
	Raz-Kids: Getting Started With Raz-Kids	Learning A-Z
	Curriculum Development	Ashley Vaughan
	STARS Department Meeting	Tai Kelly
	Creative Curriculum Training: Individual Choice	Teaching Strategies
	Mental Health Training Series	Bergen County Inter-Regional PD: Webinars
	WebABLLS/AFLS Training	Central Reach Institute
Feb. 2023	Introduction to Assessment	Central Reach Institute
	Foundations: Program Exploration and Review of Resources	Wilson Academy
	Programs, Are We Doing Enough?	Kimberly Bohichik and Christine McLeod
	The Power of Gold	MyTeachingStrategies
	CitePro: Individual Choice	CitePro
Mar. 2023	Middle States: Year 1 Update	Ashley Vaughan and Shane Miller
	Introduction To Flocabulary	Ashley Bridges, Nearpod Inc.
	Theoretical Framework of The Behavior Improvement Plan And The Place of Functional Analysis	Marlene Brown, Rutgers DDDC
	Felician Autism Collaboration In Training (FACT) Conference	Various Presenters
	Pure Edge: Culture of Care	Michelle Mitchell, Pure Edge
	“March Madness” Key Points & Buckets To Help Students Excel!	Scott Rossig
	STARS: Conover Training	Tai Kelly
	Dyslexia Training	Jenna Pelaez, Mindful Reading Center
	The National Child Traumatic Stress Network: Individual Choice	The National Child Traumatic Stress Network
May 2023	Using Assessment Data to Guide the Development of Goals and Objectives	Dr. Nissa Van Ette & Autumn Bailey, Central Reach
	Mathematics in the Creative Curriculum Classroom	Zachary Cohen, Teaching Strategies
June 2023	How to Best Prepare Learners for Extended School Year	Dr. Nissa Van Ette & Autumn Bailey, Central Reach
	Culture of Care Follow-Up Training	Michelle Mitchell, Pure Edge



Objective #3 Communication

The district's goal to establish a system of effective communication for both internal and external stakeholder groups. SBJC's Communication Plan will establish a system that continuously analyzes data from surveys and other sources to assess our current status and improve upon our weaknesses in channeling information. It will also help us to develop skills within one of the most important and untapped assets of our learning community: our SBJC families. We look to increase parent engagement through the sharing of opportunities, training, support services, and district resources.

Internal/External Communications 2022/2023 Highlights

Efforts were made to enhance both internal and external communication practices:

- **Communication Audit:** The district partnered with Laura Bishop Communications to conduct a communication audit, aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of current communication practices and identify areas for improvement.
- **Staff Communication Survey:** An end-of-year communication survey was distributed to staff members to gather their feedback and perspectives. This feedback will be instrumental in refining internal communication strategies.
- **Conference Presentations:** The district actively engaged in sharing its initiatives and partnerships through conference presentations. Presentations were made at the Felician Autism Collaboration in Teaching (FACT) Conference and NJASA/NJAPSA Conference, with plans to present at two more conferences in the upcoming fall (NJPSA/FEA Conference and Autism New Jersey Annual Conference).



SBJC's Parent Committee held its first Family Night, with dozens of families coming together to create gingerbread houses, complete crafts, and celebrate the winter.



Dr. John Burke of Felician University works with an SBJC parent during his workshop, "Promoting Gains in Social Communication using Pivotal Response Teaching." SBJC offered four parent training events in the 22/23 school year.



SBJC's Parent Committee held its first Information Night, a community resource vendor fair for families to learn all about local vendors and organizations providing resources for students.

Strengthening Family Engagement 2022/2023 Highlights

To foster strong relationships with families, several communication strategies were employed:

- **District Newsletters:** Regular newsletters were published to keep families informed about district-wide news, events, and important updates.
- **Monthly Parent Committee Meetings:** Parent committee meetings were held on a monthly basis, providing an opportunity for parents to actively participate in discussions and provide feedback in regards to family events and trainings.
- **Communication Survey:** In an effort to gather feedback and improve communication practices, a survey was created. This survey will be distributed to current families in September and to new families during intakes. The insights obtained from this survey will guide future communication strategies and address any areas for improvement.
- **Parent Resource Database Update:** The district is actively updating the parent resource database to ensure that families have access to a comprehensive collection of local resources and support services.
- **Parent Workshops and Information Nights:** To empower parents and provide them with valuable information, a series of workshops were offered throughout the year. Additionally, a parent information night and two family nights were organized to foster engagement and strengthen relationships with families.



Objective #4

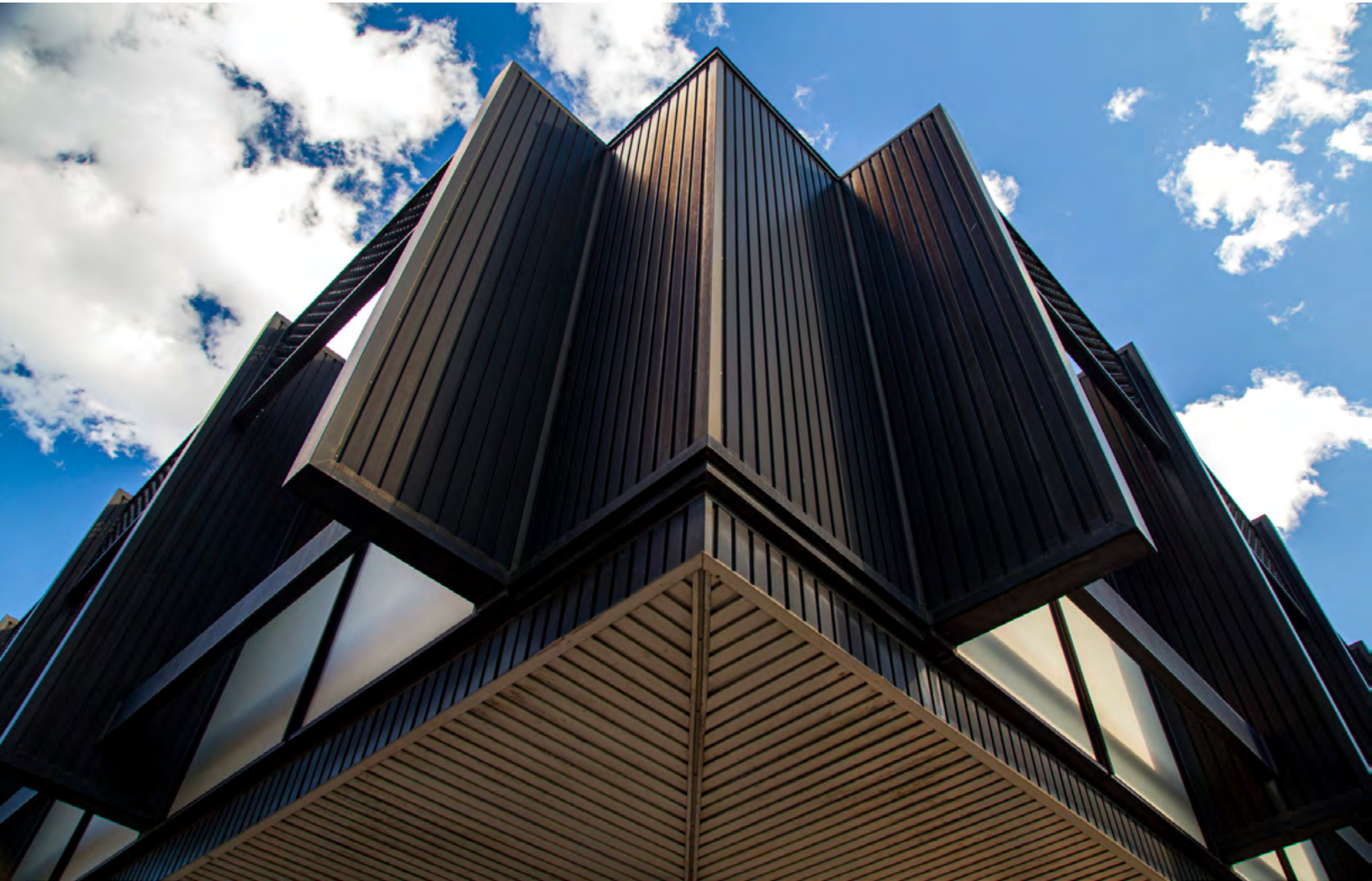
Functional Living Skills

This objective was developed in order to maximize the opportunities students have to both learn and generalize skills that promote their independence post-scholastically. We'll look to expand program-ming in the following areas: Independent Living Skills; Social/Emotional Skills; Functional Communi-cation Skills; and Community-Based Living Skills.

2022/2023 Highlights

New Building in Teterboro for STARs Program: The district secured a new building in Teterboro to accommodate the STARs (Students Transitioning to Adult Responsibilities) program. This dedicated space provides an environment conducive to learning and for practicing a wide-range of functional living skills. The space's location will provide new possibilities to the program for both community based instruction and workplace opportunities.

The SBJC STARs program focuses on fostering independence, self-advocacy, and community integration, empowering our 18-21 year-old students to lead fulfilling lives beyond the school environment. Transition is designed to establish a vision for the future for our students by providing them with instruction and training in all areas of adulthood. Our programs vary among the students since each student has unique needs, strengths, and interests.



Additional Functional Skills Offerings: Recognizing the importance of equipping students with a diverse range of functional skills, the district identified and implemented additional offerings. These skills focus on essential tasks related to daily living, personal care, communication, and community integration. By expanding the curriculum in this area, the district aims to enhance students' independence and their ability to navigate various real-life situations successfully.

South Hackensack Car Wash: Added as a new job site is the South Hackensack Car Wash, a facility that offers hands-on training in car washing and detailing, allowing students to acquire job-related skills while promoting independence, attention to detail, and a strong work ethic. The car wash serves as a valuable resource to enhance students' vocational readiness.

Expanded CBI Campus Field Trip List: To offer students more opportunities for community-based instruction (CBI), the district has expanded its campus field trip list. These trips allow students to apply functional skills in real-world settings, such as grocery shopping, banking, and public transportation. The enhanced CBI program promotes the ability to generalize skills and increases confidence in navigating community environments independently.

In-House Programming: The district has introduced additional in-house programming to provide practical training and promote functional living skills development. These programs include:

- **In-House Coffee Shop:** The Lodi Campus coffee shop serves as a training ground for students to learn customer service, money handling, and basic food handling skills. Students gain hands-on experience while fostering social interactions and developing vocational competencies.
- **In-House Laundry:** The Lodi Campus in-house laundry facility enables students to learn essential skills related to sorting, washing, folding, and maintaining clean laundry. This practical experience equips students with the necessary skills for independent living and promotes self-sufficiency.
- **In-House Car Detailing:** The Lodi Campus in-house car detailing service offers students the opportunity to learn skills associated with automotive care, including interior and exterior cleaning, waxing, and polishing. This hands-on training enhances students' vocational abilities and prepares them for potential job opportunities in the automotive industry.

Maywood Sensory Gym



New to our Maywood Campus is the Sensory Gym, a space being used to teach functional living skills by providing a calming environment for self-regulation and emotional management. It also offers opportunities for fine motor development, sensory exploration, social skill practice, and simulated daily routines.

High School Athletics



The SBJC's athletics program embodies the No Barriers mindset, empowering students to overcome obstacles and embrace their inner strength. Through sports like Cross Country, Bowling, Basketball, and Track & Field, our students develop leadership, promote healthy living, and enhance social and communication skills, fostering their independence and future involvement in extracurricular activities.

Equestrian Visits



Visits to the Bergen County Equestrian Center provide our students with opportunities for sensory integration and physical therapy through interactions with horses, as well as fostering emotional well-being, confidence, and social connections through engaging in equine-assisted activities.

Middle States Standards: Self-Study Data and Committees

On March 18, 2022, all staff completed the Middle States self-study which asked participants to rank the district on 240 indicators aligned to the 12 Middle States Standards. This self-study was originally completed in 2019, and SBJC staff again completed the survey in spring of 2022 in order to gather more recent and relevant data. When the data from both years was compared, the 2022 survey data revealed that staff ranked the district higher on 97% of these indicators than they originally had in 2019.

In 2023-2024 we plan to hold a Standards Committee Meeting in which all staff will be assigned or reassigned to one of the following committees for participation and input:

- Standard 1: Mission
 - Standard 2: Governance & Leadership
 - Standard 3: System Improvement Planning
 - Standard 4: Finances
 - Standard 5: Facilities
 - Standard 6: System Organization and Staff
 - Standard 7: Health and Safety
 - Standard 8: Educational Program
- Standard 9: Evidence of School System Effectiveness
 - Standard 10: Student Services
 - Standard 11: Student Life and Student Activities
 - Standard 12: Information Resources

Middle States Standard	2019 Survey Results	2022 Survey Results	Difference
Standard 1: Mission			
Meets Overall Assessment of the School's Adherence to the Standard:	52.38%	79.12%	26.74%
Standard 2: Governance and Leadership			
Meets Overall Assessment of the School's Adherence to the Standard:	54.76%	76.37%	21.61%
Standard 3. School Improvement Planning			
Meets Overall Assessment of the School's Adherence to the Standard:	51.19%	80.77%	29.58%
Standard 4. Finances			
Meets Overall Assessment of the School's Adherence to the Standard:	61.90%	82.42%	20.52%
Standard 5. Facilities			
Meets Overall Assessment of the School's Adherence to the Standard:	45.24%	75.82%	30.58%
Standard 6. School Organization and Staff			
Meets Overall Assessment of the School's Adherence to the Standard:	51.19%	79.67%	28.48%
Standard 7. Health and Safety			
Meets Overall Assessment of the School's Adherence to the Standard:	70.24%	85.71%	15.47%
Standard 8. Educational Program			
Meets Overall Assessment of the School's Adherence to the Standard:	59.52%	76.92%	17.40%
Standard 9. Assessment and Evidence of Student Learning			
Meets Overall Assessment of the School's Adherence to the Standard:	69.05%	84.07%	15.02%
Standard 10. Student Services			
Meets Overall Assessment of the School's Adherence to the Standard:	61.90%	79.12%	17.22%
Standard 11. Student Life and Student Activities			
Meets Overall Assessment of the School's Adherence to the Standard:	60.71%	78.02%	17.31%
Standard 12. Information Resources			
Meets Overall Assessment of the School's Adherence to the Standard:	61.90%	79.67%	17.77%

SBJC Board of Education

The South Bergen Jointure Commission is governed by a seventeen member Board of Education. This Board of Education is comprised of the superintendents of the South Bergen Jointure Commission’s participating districts and includes President and Vice President positions. The South Bergen Jointure Commission Board of Education is as follows:

Board Member		District
Mr. Damian Kennedy	<i>President</i>	Bogota
Mr. Joseph DeCorso	<i>Vice President</i>	Lyndhurst
Dr. Dario Sforza		Becton Regional
Ms. Allison Evans		Carlstadt
Mr. Giovanni Giancaspro		East Rutherford
Mr. Nicholas Perrapato		Garfield
Dr. Matthew Helfant		Hasbrouck Heights
Mr. Frank Scarafile		Little Ferry
Mr. Frank D'Amico		Lodi
Mr. James Knipper		Moonachie
Ms. Danielle Shanley		New Milford
Dr. Stephen Yurchak		North Arlington
Dr. Sue DeNobile		Rochelle Park
Mr. John Hurley		Rutherford
Mr. Jason Chirichella		South Hackensack
Dr. Yvette Lozanski		Wallington
Mr. Anthony Albro		Wood-Ridge





Learn more online at:
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JOINTURE COMMISSION**

We welcome all comments and
questions. Please contact us at:
info@njsbjc.org