



COMMONWEALTH  
EDUCATION  
BLUEPRINT  
report

Our vision





COMMONWEALTH  
EDUCATION  
BLUEPRINT

# Foreward



**T**he idea for the Commonwealth Education Blueprint came about as we imagined a vision for the future of public education. What could public education in the commonwealth look like when today's kindergartners graduate from high school? In order to make a comprehensive document—or blueprint—of this vision, we knew we would need to include stakeholders from every part of the education community. We gathered members of school boards, district administration, business managers, solicitors, transportation officials, classroom teachers, principals, PTOs and PTAs, charter schools, business leaders, higher education entities, community organizations and any group that has some involvement in educating our children. We held multiple meetings of a large steering committee, brought in over 100 stakeholders for a two-day summit, invited several hundred more to focus groups held across the commonwealth and surveyed over 1,000 members of the public in an effort to create a blueprint for the future of education that truly represents the vision of everyone involved in educating a child from the earliest stages up through career employment. In October 2018, we released our Phase I report, which only scratched the surface of what we wanted for the future. This final document, the Commonwealth Education Blueprint, represents a vision for not only the future of public education, but for the future of all children who will benefit from Pennsylvania's public education system.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Faccinnetto".

**Michael Faccinnetto, PSBA President 2018**

**O**ur goal in creating the Commonwealth Education Blueprint report was to build on the work of the many education representatives who passionately set forth the vision in Phase I of the project; to distill that vision; and to provide a roadmap for achieving an exceptional public education for all Pennsylvania students.

We continued our efforts to engage representatives from all facets of public education in developing specific recommendations to move forward with a vision that focuses on recognizing the ongoing needs of learners, educators and communities, and preparing students for their role as engaged, informed and effective citizens.

As you review the Blueprint, we encourage you to adopt the mindset of what could and should be the vision for public education in the future. The Commonwealth Education Blueprint is a snapshot of our vision for the next generation, and we challenge ourselves and our readers to continue the visioning process well beyond this report.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Hutchinson".

**David Hutchinson, PSBA President 2019**

# A Vision of Education in 2038



**T**he Jackson family has just moved to Pennsylvania, and they are excited to tour their local school and observe the quality educational experiences that have become the commonwealth's trademark. During open house night, Mrs. Jackson immediately notices that the school staff has positive, caring relationships with students and fosters a learning environment that is rooted in a genuine desire to learn and contribute through projects that have real-world applications.

A teacher describes that the students are using engineering, science and math skills to design a wheelchair accessory. In another class, students are investigating the death of a fictional person by analyzing the evidence, including autopsy reports and medical history, and using biology, human physiology, physics, scientific writing and analysis. The teacher explains to families that the teachers serve as guides and facilitators of learning, helping students to find resources and discover solutions using collaboration and creativity. Instead of providing knowledge with students passively learning, teachers cultivate discovery and students are actively engaged in their own learning. Career learning paths allow students to individually focus on a particular area of interest. The principal explains the assessment process, which is based on classroom activities, projects, notebooks, and portfolios that are evaluated using performance rubrics and an end of course assessment.

Innovation is flourishing in the school, because educators are encouraged and trained to develop new ways to engage students in exciting hands-on, project-based learning opportunities. The principal describes that education is customized to the individual student's interests and career goals, including many opportunities due to the school's community and business partnerships as well as additional

state funding for career exploration. Students can participate in internships with local businesses, teach in early childhood learning programs in the community, attend college courses through concurrent enrollment programs, attain certifications through the career and technical center, and more.

A guidance counselor explains that teacher preparation programs at colleges around the state have been providing training in social-emotional learning and trauma-informed education. The resources are in place to identify and support students transitioning into a new school and help them overcome trauma, personal obstacles and any challenges they may face in the years ahead. The principal further elaborates that there are many opportunities for families to be involved in shaping educational offerings in the schools and supporting their children's academic achievements. Teacher recruitment programs are designed to attract high-quality teachers who reflect the diversity of the community and receive comprehensive mentoring and professional education programs. The school district is focused on equity and ensuring that the necessary resources are available for each student to receive whatever he or she individually needs to be successful in school and beyond.

*Implementation of the Commonwealth Education Blueprint may not make every child an enthusiastic learner. As an education community, we know we will continue to face challenges with inspiring some learners. However, successful implementation of the Commonwealth Education Blueprint would certainly change the face of education in Pennsylvania and provide us with the opportunity and resources to focus on inspiring students and providing an excellent, equitable education to each and every one of them. That is the heart of this vision.*



# Using this Document

**T**his report is the culmination of collaboration, strategic visioning, goalsetting and research by many voices in public education throughout the commonwealth. It is broken down into three sections. Our Core Beliefs and Areas of Focus provide the lens through which our visioning work was structured and completed. The Vision contains the goals established for the future of public education. Each of those goals include:

- The **Visionary Goal** statement
- **Identified Obstacles:** challenges identified by stakeholders that explain why these visionary goals are not occurring right now or why they are not broadly implemented.
- **Recommendations to Achieve:** specific recommendations for how to move forward in implementing the visionary goals. These are suggestions broadly aimed at practical steps that may be taken by school entities, the legislature, state agencies and organizations, systems of higher education and school communities. We recognize that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to implementing a vision. School entities and communities should assess what will work best based on their own needs, resources and community cultures.
- **Further Reading and Discussion:** examples of school entity practices that demonstrate the vision, research and articles for further reading and helpful resource documents. *\*Please note: the links contained in this document may change over time and are meant to be helpful resources. They are not an endorsement of any specific program or organization.*

The final section on Current Practices to Consider provides a shorter list of goals that many school entities are implementing currently and that could be more broadly applied to take steps now toward the vision of excellent, equitable education for all Pennsylvania students.

Our goal is for the Commonwealth Education Blueprint to spark interest, research and discussion among educational entities and communities about how the future of public education in Pennsylvania should continue to evolve to meet the ever-changing needs of learners and educators.

## *The Commonwealth Education Blueprint Committee*

### Our Core Beliefs For Public Education in Pennsylvania

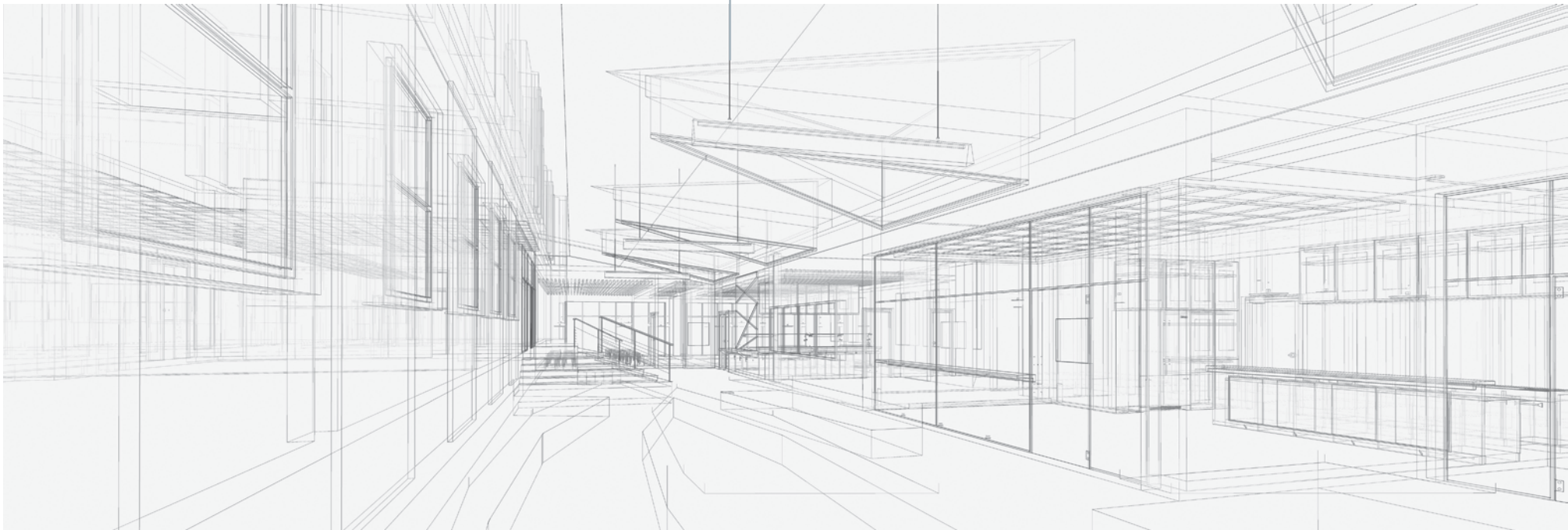
#### —We . . .

- Promote collaboration and cooperation at all levels of education and among policymakers and stakeholders.
- Recognize that learning occurs everywhere and learners progress by facing varying experiences and challenges, preparing them for their role as engaged, informed and effective citizens.
- Embrace innovation in all areas of education.
- Advocate for student learning environments that are physically and emotionally safe places where diversity of thought and respectful and vigorous debate of different perspectives is respected and encouraged.
- Advocate for all public schools to have facilities that are safe, secure, flexible, sustainable and reflect current and future learning needs.
- Strive for accountable leadership within schools, families and communities.
- Advocate for maintaining local governance and decision-making in public education.

# Areas of **Focus**

**A**s part of the Commonwealth Education Blueprint project, a statewide survey was conducted to gauge the thoughts and ideas of educators, administrators, students, school directors and community members around the principles and goals of the Blueprint. Data indicated that support for the following areas was strongest. These became our areas of focus in determining the elements of the Blueprint:

- Whole-child development
- Social-emotional learning and behavioral health
- Hands-on, project-based learning
- Pathways for career success
- Positive school climate and relationships between students and staff



# The **Vision** Teaching and Learning

## Visionary Goal

**M**aximize the intrinsic motivation of students through the use of curriculum that focuses on real-world application and allows students a voice in the personalization of their learning.

## Identified Obstacles

**Student Needs:** There are many obstacles to identifying intrinsic motivation and physical or cultural challenges that need to be overcome before we can elicit motivation and student voice.

**Philosophy:** We recognize the difficulty in overcoming the “we’ve never done it this way before” philosophy. Higher education will need to shift to train teachers this way. School entities will need to provide professional development opportunities, create more flexibility and allot time for teaching styles like team teaching and project-based learning.

**Mandates:** Standardized testing and the amount of instructional time it takes to prepare, meeting state academic standards and requirements, and overcoming discrepancies between teaching and assessment are all challenges to overcome.



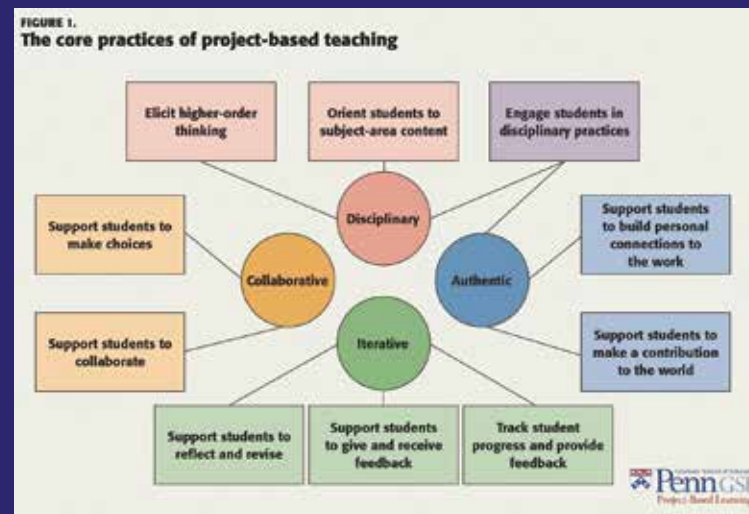
## Recommendations to Achieve

Implement a research-based curricular model of interdisciplinary project-based learning at the elementary, middle and high school level, including team teaching and project-based assessment.

Add a measurement to the Future Ready PA Index for teachers and schools implementing project-based learning and assessments.

## Further Reading and Discussion

Preparing Teachers for Project-Based Teaching (University of Pennsylvania, Graduate School of Education)



Social Studies/English Language Arts: Community Mapping and Storytelling  
Science: Rocket composting of uneaten cafeteria food (Wayne Highlands SD)

Interdisciplinary education and philosophy: Solutionaries and the Institute for Humane Education (Zoe Weil)

“Moving Toward Mastery: Growing, Developing and Sustaining Educators for Competency-Based Education” Cooperative Teaching Tools, Models and Resources (University of Kansas)

Project Lead The Way



# The Vision Teaching and Learning

## Visionary Goal

**F**oster the development of creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication skills in all student learning and activities.

## Identified Obstacles

**Assessment:** There are inherent challenges associated with assessing and measuring these skills, such as identifying the purpose and type of assessment and measuring the application of skills.

**Training and Resources:** Higher education may not be training and valuing these skills. School entities struggle with professional development and assessing teachers on these factors. Focusing on these skills requires planning, time and space to integrate into the curriculum as well as overcoming the standardized testing hedge that blocks our time and resources.

**Parents and Caregivers:** Parents and caregivers may resist this philosophy, because they want their kids to pass tests and get good grades. There is a lack of understanding the growth mindset. This is contrasted by students without parental involvement and the school's ability to balance these competing needs.

## Further Reading and Discussion

Preparing 21st Century Students for a Global Society: An Educator's Guide to the "Four Cs" (National Education Association)

How to Use the "4 C's" Rubrics (Buck Institute for Education, Project Based Learning Works)

## Recommendations to Achieve

Employ rubrics that measure skills such as collaboration, communication, creativity and critical thinking. Students should be assessed annually by teachers with a simple tool to inform educational practices for the next year and incorporate into parent-teacher communications.

Recommend that all state-related teacher preparation programs train teachers throughout the program in confidence to explore areas with students rather than knowing all the answers, integrating project-based learning into the academic curriculum and teaching more self-reflection with a rubric to ensure lesson plans incorporate each of these "C" skills.

## Visionary Goal

**C**ontinuously assess and update curriculum and student learning options at the state and local level in order to best prepare students for life after high school.

## Identified Obstacles

**Communication and Conflict:** Local school entities do not always receive adequate resources and training on implementing state academic standards. Some school entities disagree with the idea of Common Core or other state-mandated learning standards that do not reflect their local teaching and learning philosophy.

**Time and Resource Constraints:** Reviewing and revising the entire curricular system from academic standards to curriculum maps, professional development and textbook availability and cost is incredibly time-consuming and requires vast human and financial resources.

## Recommendations to Achieve

Recommend development of a state taskforce on curriculum and academic standards to review Chapter 4 regulations and the Standards Aligned System (SAS). The taskforce should include colleges, businesses and educators.

The taskforce should explore ways to move curriculum and graduation requirements beyond traditionally recognized subjects and the Carnegie Unit to more practical curriculum for world citizenship.

Establish fewer state standards and more flexibility for local review of curriculum and measurement of competency based on standards rather than credits.

## Further Reading and Discussion

Understanding by Design (Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe)

Power Standards: Focusing on the Essential

Pennsylvania Initiates Review of Science Standards to Modernize Curriculum



# The **Vision**

## Teaching and Learning

### Visionary Goal

**T**o increase educational options for all students, encourage flexibility in:

- Learning paths
- Cross-curricular learning
- Integration of skills across the curriculum
- Appropriate and innovative use of technology, such as blended learning and course sharing opportunities among schools

### Identified Obstacles

**Expectations:** Higher education, parents', families' and students' expectations of what learning and success are supposed to look like and how learning should be achieved are obstacles to engaging in new methods.

### Logistics and Equity:

- Time, space and scheduling limit flexibility.
- Digital and geographic equity concerns present challenges in connectivity and transportation.

### Assessment and Credentialing:

- How do we go beyond standardized testing to assess and measure this type of learning?
- What type of credentialing allows flexibility for switching learning pathways?

### Competitive Nature:

- Districts that are historically social or athletic rivals may not collaborate.
- There are challenges with different tax bases and administrative leadership philosophies between school entities.
- Stakeholders can be adversarial.

### Recommendations to Achieve

**Redefine Evaluation:** Draft legislation, regulations and/or local graduation requirements and curriculum to allow different types of assessments and graduation readiness measures. For example: portfolios demonstrating core academic achievement and diversity of experiences or micro-credentialing to provide diploma with specialized certificates.

**Higher Education Expectations:** Encourage state-related colleges and universities to revise admission processes to evaluate different measurements of ability to learn and master knowledge rather than academic achievement in specific courses.

### Legislature and State Board of Education:

- Incentivize open campus idea of course sharing among schools, whether physical or virtual
- Provide funding, technical assistance and specific provisions for professional development options to all school entities

### Universal Internet Access:

- Encourage state and federal interagency cooperation
- Establish E-rate consortiums to create more community hubs—multiple school entities, school entities-libraries—to pool funding rather than compete
- Develop partnerships with businesses to request and promote greater internet infrastructure within regions

### Further Reading and Discussion

**Open Campus**—sharing courses and resources among school districts

**Portfolio Assessments**

**Future City** (interdisciplinary, middle school program—curricular or co-curricular)

**Innovative content delivery networks/repository** – school entity-wide and regional networks for teacher idea-sharing within the school entity and between school entities in an Intermediate Unit; could also be used to provide a repository of community members with specific skills/knowledge to use as resources/presenters

**Use of outside resources to supplement instruction or provide additional enrichment, monitored by school staff (i.e., Kahn Academy)**

# The **Vision**

## Teaching and Learning

### Visionary Goal

**A**cknowledge the role that non-educational barriers have on student learning and social-emotional well-being. Provide resources and intentional instruction to address student needs, including strategies for developing resilience.

### Identified Obstacles

#### **Silos and Communication Between Agencies:**

- Schools, behavioral health agencies, medical providers and social agencies do not always cooperate.
- Legal considerations and authorization complicate sharing of information.
- Staffing and resource limitations cause obstacles.

**Training and Identification:** There is a lack of training for staff, including lunch monitors, bus drivers, support staff and teachers to analyze behavior and recognize issues to prompt support rather than discipline. Training is needed on enacting restorative practices. There are concerns about overtraining and burnout. Identifying issues versus normal student drama; secondary trauma for teachers; and resistance from parents, caregivers and students to share information create obstacles.

**Philosophy:** Social-emotional learning is seen as less important than math and reading. There are time, space and assessment limitations. Some perceive that restorative practices are too hard for some student populations or that it's too soft on kids.

**Equity and Culture:** School entities face challenges teaching social skills when there are different social backgrounds and a lack of financial resources to provide training and staffing to implement restorative practices.

### Recommendations to Achieve

Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) and Resilience screening tools should be standardized across the state and provided at no cost through the PA Department of Health to all school entities for use by behavioral health staff. This should be added as a student health screening requirement in School Code.

Higher Education: All state-related colleges and universities should annually evaluate trauma-informed approach education and social-emotional learning in teacher preparation programs in coordination with local school entities and community agencies.

School entities should conduct an annual audit of all removal discipline, such as suspensions and expulsions. This audit should be analyzed against school climate data and implementation of restorative practices, specifically looking at repeat offenders.

Health and Physical Education state academic standards should include specific standard for social-emotional learning. This should encompass self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, relationship skills and social awareness.

### Further Reading and Discussion

School-wide social-emotional learning—CASEL

Restorative practice versus exclusion discipline—developing sense of community: Pittsburgh Public Schools and Bethlehem Area SD

Restorative Practices in Schools (National Conflict Resolution Center)

Secondary Trauma and teacher burnout: “Teachers Support Social-Emotional Learning, But Say Students in Distress Strain Their Skills” (Education Week)

PA Model Trauma-Informed Approach Plan: Guidelines for School Entities (PA Commission on Crime and Delinquency)

Resilience resources:

- Resiliency in Action
- Resilience Film

Challenge Success

# The **Vision** Teaching and Learning

## Visionary Goal

**P**rovide universal access to high-quality early childhood education as an effective tool for equity in kindergarten readiness and lifelong learning.

## Identified Obstacles

**Resistance:** Parents and caregivers may prefer to keep children home. Private providers may develop resistance and lobbying against state-provided programs.

**Funding:** How will costs be funded when there are not enough education dollars for current school-age programs?

## Recommendations to Achieve

Create and fund programs through Early Intervention—both birth-3 and pre-school aged. Having more state-funded early childhood education opportunities would help resolve challenges with least restrictive environment placements and provide more learning opportunities for all students.

Establish state laws or regulations allowing each intermediate unit provide access to free, appropriate early childhood education from the age of 3 to all students.

## Further Reading and Discussion

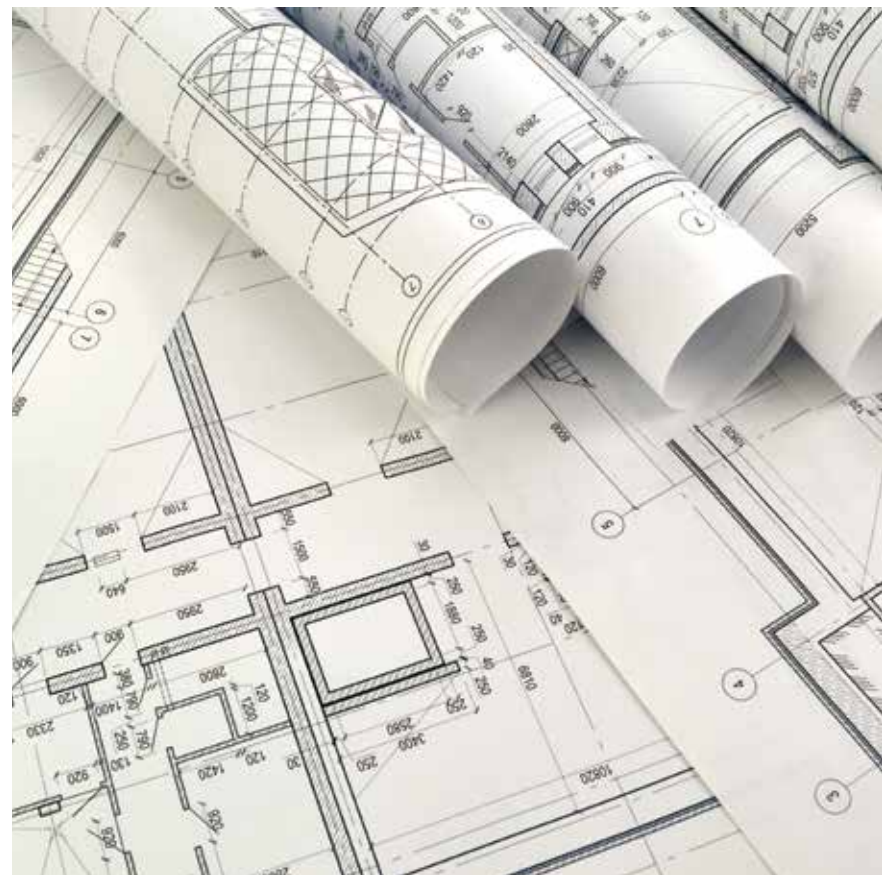
Australia provides universal access to early childhood education for age 4 and up

United Way Success by 6

- Erie Co.
- Cumberland Co.
- Lackawanna/Wayne Co.
- Bucks Co.
- Mercer Co.

Pre-Kindergarten Scholarship Opportunities (PA Dept. of Community and Economic Development)

Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children: Early Learning



# The **Vision** Teaching and Learning

## Visionary Goal

**P**rovide universal access to high-quality, full-day kindergarten.

## Identified Obstacles

**Funding:** Not enough money is available for school buildings and for teachers.

**Transportation:** There is a need for more buses. Scheduling challenges also create obstacles.

**Staffing:** The shortage of teachers and geographic differences in decreased student enrollment versus increased enrollment is an obstacle. How do we help teachers move to the need? The shortage of nursing services is also a challenge.

**Parent and Caregiver Resistance:** Some parents and caregivers believe it is too much for their child to do full-day or are resistant to something different.

## Recommendations to Achieve

School districts who are unable to provide full-day programs based on funding or space constraints should partner with other school districts or intermediate units so every student has access to a full-day program.

Create a state task force to develop recommendations on providing adequate state funding for full-day kindergarten programs in every school district and flexibility in program implementation to meet the challenges of adequate building space, school nursing services and transportation for kindergarten students.

## Further Reading and Discussion

Separating space and staff devoted to Kindergarten programs: [Mechanicsburg Kindergarten Academy](#)

Flexibility in space: “High School Might be the Place for PreK”

Kindergarten: Full Versus Half-Day (Indiana University of PA)

Association of a Full-Day vs. Part-Day Preschool Intervention (Journal of the American Medical Association, 2014)

## Visionary Goal

**C**reate connections with educational institutions, early learning through postsecondary, to ensure alignment in curriculum and learning.

## Identified Obstacles

**Friction:** Friction exists between private providers, state-supported institutions and traditional public schools and intermediate units. There are different terms, lack of communication and financial friction.

**Logistics:** Who is going to create and maintain this collaboration? Should each school entity create a committee? This would cause concerns with hours in the day and staff to create these connections.

**Scope:** There are so many institutions that even knowing who is in your community could be challenging. It might be easier to narrow this to state-supported postsecondary institutions or those most attended by students.

## Recommendations to Achieve

Create a state task force to study and issue recommendations on developing collaboration between early childhood education providers, school entities and postsecondary institutions, including alignment of academic standards, curriculum and educator training.

Each intermediate unit or individual district should consider developing an advisory council with local districts, early childhood education providers and state-related postsecondary institutions located within the region to meet annually and share information about learning standards, curriculum, academic programs and graduation requirements.

## Further Reading and Discussion

Building Partnerships: College and Career Pathways (Univ. of California, Berkley)

Early Care and Education Partnerships: Literature Review (U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services)



# The **Vision**

## Teaching and Learning

### Visionary Goal

**E**mbed work and career-based exploration, expanded partnerships and flexible time in school environments in order to develop a greater awareness of and exposure to college and career opportunities.

### Identified Obstacles

**Staffing:** Who will be able to do this work? Need to rethink the roles of guidance counselors. Challenges balancing work with students and employers on career exploration and handling scheduling and behavioral health needs. Smaller caseload for guidance counselors is needed.

**Safety:** Challenges regarding background checks and clearances for outside mentors and individuals coming into the schools and having supervisors to monitor and keep students safe.

**Equity:** Geographic challenges of resources and businesses that may be available. Significantly different in Philadelphia versus rural PA.

**Scheduling:** Getting students scheduled for opportunities is an obstacle. Taking instructional time and having ability for parents or caregivers to attend meetings and career fairs to discuss opportunities.

### Recommendations to Achieve

Consider making transition planning available for all secondary students for postsecondary opportunities with an assigned or selected mentor(s) from the school or the community and checkpoints each semester in high school.

Create learning tracks and special interest areas within instructional programs for career-based exploration.

Develop a summer internship program with local businesses. This could be tied to independent study work.

Consider partnership programs with local businesses for students who want work permits. This could include a recommended or vetted list of businesses and agencies with good work-based opportunities.

### Further Reading and Discussion

Whitaker Center program – [Surgery Live!](#) Students watch a live surgery and talk about it in theatre setting (medical fields)

[Career and College planning](#) – interactive resources and programs through guidance department (State College Area SD)

[Keystone Central SD Diversified Occupations Program](#)

[Pennsylvania CareerZone](#) (PA Dept. of Education (PDE))

Students teaching students: in-house day care programs and teaching younger students about skills and career fields: [Tyrone Area SD](#)

[Pathways to Success](#) (Central Columbia SD)

# The **Vision**

## Teaching and Learning

### Visionary Goal

**I**ncrease awareness of and develop partnerships for concurrent or dual enrollment in postsecondary programs.

**Concurrent Enrollment:** A program administered and developed by a school entity and an eligible postsecondary institution that allows students to concurrently enroll in postsecondary courses and to receive both secondary and postsecondary credit for that coursework [dual credit]. (24 P.S. § 16-1602-B) Concurrent enrollment courses may be taught by secondary teachers approved by a postsecondary institution for delivery of course instruction within a secondary school.

**Dual Enrollment:** A student is enrolled in two institutions at the same time, but a specific program does not address how the credits earned are handled.

### Identified Obstacles

**Funding:** Challenges with potential costs for students. Consider coordination of costs for placement of student teachers at school entities versus placements of students in college courses (quid pro quo).

**Equity and Staffing:** Willingness and availability of teachers to get approved to offer these courses can be an obstacle. There are also challenges in some geographic regions for opportunities to partner with higher education institutions.

### Communication and Expectations:

Obstacles exist between students, school entities and colleges with their expectations and what courses they need versus what they have available for dual/concurrent enrollment. Are college expectations realistic and necessary in terms of requirements for courses and majors?

There is confusion with School Code and grants about what dual enrollment includes versus concurrent enrollment.

### Recommendations to Achieve

State-related postsecondary institutions should accept articulation agreements to grant credits for dual or concurrent enrollment courses, with a vision to expand this to all higher education institutions in the future.

School entities should develop partnerships with postsecondary institutions to provide in-person or online concurrent or dual enrollment opportunities and ensure those opportunities are included in course guides and promoted through the guidance department for all students.

School districts should consider partnering with intermediate units and career and technical centers for more staffing options of educators who are approved to offer postsecondary courses.

### Further Reading and Discussion

[Dual Credit Program Toolkit for Pennsylvania School Entities \(PDE\)](#)

[Your Burning Questions About Dual Enrollment Answered](#) (U.S. Dept. of Education)

Consider grants and foundations or businesses that can cover student or teacher costs

“Opportunity scholarships” for future educators – school entity paying for concurrent enrollment opportunity if student agrees to come back and teach for the school entity. Requirements to pay back funding if not returning to the school entity.

# The **Vision**

## Staffing and Facilities

### Visionary Goal

**E**nsure a flexible teaching certification structure aligned with the needs of schools and their students.

### Identified Obstacles

There is a lack of local stakeholder input into changes made to the certification process.

The speed of attaining certifications and ability to start teaching directly affects sustainable staffing:

- Overcomplication and lack of clarity in certification process
- Certification process through the state agency gets stuck in the pipeline

There is a lack of flexibility in teacher preparation programs for higher education due to state requirements, and there is often a disconnect between the practitioner and programs.

### Recommendations to Achieve

The state should extend discretion to local school entities to place noncertified subject area employees for up to 90 days.

PDE should conduct a meeting every three years with school entities and higher education institutions to review certification areas and coursework to ensure that they mirror the needs of school entities.

PDE should improve the certification process (Teacher Information Management System) by providing additional detail to applicants about specific items needed to complete an application.

Within 30 days of a complete file, PDE should generate notification of certification status of an applicant.

The state should develop a flow chart for use by higher education institutions to clarify routes to certification process, including adding certifications.

### Further Reading and Discussion

National Institute for School Leadership (NISL) Executive Development Program for school administrators (Pennsylvania Inspired Leadership program based on these principles)

Pennsylvania Alternative Teacher Certification

Quality Indicators for Nontraditional Teacher Preparation Programs (National Association for Alternative Certification)



# The **Vision** Staffing and Facilities

## Visionary Goal

Increase the recruitment and retention of racially, ethnically and linguistically diverse teachers in order to bring a greater variety of skills, knowledge and experiences to educational environments.

## Identified Obstacles

Lack of a pool or pipeline (people of diverse backgrounds don't feel welcome):

- Inherent bias in the online application process
- Complexity of the demographics of the state – certain regions may not attract diverse candidates
- Unwelcoming communities due to lack of cultural awareness and sensitivity

Lack of formal training at the university level on cultural diversity and sensitivity.

Lack of awareness that there is a bias in the hiring process because candidate doesn't fit "the academia mold."

Lack of models or mentors for potential students who could become teachers.

## Recommendations to Achieve

K-12 students should be exposed to career pathways in which they are underrepresented.

State-related colleges and universities should add a course requirement on cultural competencies and sensitivity to teacher preparation programs within three years.

Within two years, the Future Ready PA Index should include a report out of staff demographics on the district facts page.

School entities should review their hiring and staff retention models and procedures for bias to ensure equitable practices within three years.

## Further Reading and Discussion

[Research for Action data on teacher diversity in PA \(see public dataset\)](#)

[PSBA Equity Toolkit](#)

[Research for Action whitepaper on recruiting for teacher diversity in PA and PDE's efforts toward teacher diversity: "Patching the Leaky Pipeline"](#)

[Erie City SD diversity efforts](#)

## Visionary Goal

Increase the level of preparedness of educators entering the profession and encourage longevity of service at one school entity.

## Identified Obstacles

Lack of competitive salary for candidates versus private sector or business.

Scarcity of positions available in a single school entity.

Emotional stress of work results in teacher burnout, which hinders longevity of service.

Lack of time, structure and supports for onsite collaboration.

Lack of coaching and mentoring opportunities between new and senior staff.

## Recommendations to Achieve

School entities should develop local incentive programs to encourage longevity of service within the school entity.

School directors, building level administrators and central office administrators should receive training on behavioral health and well-being, including recognizing and responding to signs and symptoms of stress, secondary trauma and burnout within the next three years.

In order to increase staff retention, school entities should review existing policies, procedures, handbooks and contracts to identify areas for professional flexibility in the teacher workday. For example, allowing staff to arrive late or leave early for personal appointments without using a sick day.

All staff in supervisory roles, including teacher leaders, must have training on established coaching models (e.g., NISL) or employee onboarding programs.

## Further Reading and Discussion

[Educator Self-Care plans to reduce burnout and secondary trauma \(Association of American Educators resources\).](#)

[PA Model Trauma-Informed Approach Plan: Guidelines for School Entities \(PA Commission on Crime and Delinquency\)](#)

[National Child Traumatic Stress Network: Self-Care for Educators](#)

[NISL Executive Development Program for school administrators](#)



# The **Vision**

## Staffing and Facilities

### Visionary Goal

**E**xpand professional development for all educators with targeted, flexible, personalized opportunities throughout their careers.

### Identified Obstacles

Lack of quality professional development targeted to specific needs—geared toward teachers but does not meet the needs of nurses and counselors.

Lack of opportunity to apply what is learned.

Time constraints based on school calendar structure.

Too many state-mandated requirements impacting what must be included in professional development.

Isolation and a lack of collaboration or sharing resources between entities and within departments in a school entity creates a silo mentality.

Need to separate between professional development and induction programs.

Additional professional development is needed at administrative levels.

### Recommendations to Achieve

School entities should include professional development in the Professional Education Plan on fostering positive and appropriate relationships in the educational community, i.e., positive relationships with administrators, teacher and staff colleagues, and appropriate relationships with students and parents/families.

School entities should include professional development in the Professional Education Plan to cultivate cultural competencies that will prepare teachers for educating and mentoring diverse student populations.

School entities should conduct staff surveys regarding professional development needs and create differentiated and personalized professional development plans based on those needs.

The PA School Boards Association (PSBA) and other state organizations will investigate partnership opportunities with leadership and professional organizations to publish information sharing best practices in sustaining and applying professional learning.



### Further Reading and Discussion

Offer opportunities for professional development (learning), such as a mini-conference, with options to customize professional development offerings—one day of learning, next day hands-on application exercises of what was learned the day before (Bellefonte Area SD)

Micro-Credentialing and Personalized Learning for teachers

Mentoring programs and portfolio assessments for demonstration of competency

- PA Association of School Administrators mentoring program
- Flexible Mentorship Models Create Better Prepared Teachers

# The **Vision** Staffing and Facilities

## Visionary Goal

**C**reate a safe, supportive and collaborative environment for teachers to improve their practice and deliver content in innovative and relevant ways.

## Identified Obstacles

Lack of clarity and responsibility for school climate and culture.

Lack of support from all levels to take risks.

Accountability testing requirements create fear of taking risks. Administration and staff may feel their positions are in jeopardy if they take risks.

## Further Reading and Discussion

Remake Learning Network model — encourage partnerships through sharing resources and innovative practices between school entities, businesses, foundations, museums and other community partners (Hampton Township SD)

National Assessment of Educational Progress data on student proficiency scores: “Report: More states setting higher ‘proficiency’ standards on assessments”

## Recommendations to Achieve

Ensure that student learning environments are physically, emotionally and intellectually safe spaces where diversity of thought and perspective are respected and encouraged by both teachers and students. This includes academic diversity, LGBTQ discussions, trauma-informed approach, politics, race and diversity, gender and other equity issues. Each school entity should have designated staff or a committee to assess and monitor.

Accountability for educators should be based on authentic measures of student learning.

Publicly reported accountability data from the PDE should only be PVAAS or growth-focused so that educators feel comfortable innovating their instructional practices and taking risks. The data on PSSA and Keystone scores should be provided to individual students, parents, families and schools only.

School entities should develop practices and create ways for staff and educators to share information about individual likes and learning styles of students.



# The **Vision**

## Staffing and Facilities

### Visionary Goal

**F**ocus educator preparation on the need for customizing educational programs and content delivery to meet individual student needs.

### Identified Obstacles

Lack of high-quality training in using data to make instructional decisions.

Disconnect between higher education teacher preparation and K-12 needs.

Personalized learning is akin to differentiated instruction, which has developed a negative connotation for some in the education field.

### Recommendations to Achieve

State education organizations and agencies will meet and develop common language and examples for mass customized and individualized learning, personalized learning and differentiation, including more sample lessons and resources incorporated into the SAS for consideration by school entities.

Student teaching experiences should require practice using actual student data to make instructional decisions, including more training for cooperating teachers in collaboration with the teacher education program.

### Further Reading and Discussion

Differentiated Instruction Research:  
“Differentiated instruction in a data-based decision-making context” (Faber 2017)

How Does Personalized Learning Affect Student Achievement?

National Association of Elementary School Principals white paper on “Using Student Achievement Data to Support Instructional Decision Making”

Penn State Professional Development School: Teacher Inquiry

# The **Vision**

## Staffing and Facilities

### Visionary Goal

**E**valuate and update school facilities to ensure they meet the evolving needs of students and staff, including designing facilities for multiple uses and to serve as a hub for community services and activities.

### Identified Obstacles

Lack of financial resources to update school facilities.

Time and complexity of planning and approval process (PlanCon).

Risks of being innovative without knowing what will be relevant once the planning and approval process is completed.

Lack of equity in updating facilities to meet the needs of all students and staff.

Lack of shared responsibility and ownership with the community.

Safety and security concerns.

Ongoing maintenance and staffing needs.



### Recommendations to Achieve

School entities should establish and formalize public/private partnerships to maintain and develop facilities that meet the needs of both the school and the community.

When renovating or building new facilities, school entities should assess the needs of students, staff and community 20, 40, and 60 years out.

### Further Reading and Discussion

Spring Grove Area SD—transforming old middle school building into a community center

Penn Manor High School building project—building for technology and the curriculum of the future (Penn Manor SD)



# The **Vision**

## Family and Community Engagement

### Visionary Goal

**E**mbrace the different strengths, challenges and goals of families and create flexible and adaptive plans to engage with families that reflect the diversity of the community.

### Identified Obstacles

**Culture of Inequity:** School entities may lack a focus on equity and meeting the diverse needs of the whole community. Need schoolwide equity programs with a focus on equity as the foundation and cultural competency training.

**Culture of School-Community Relationships:** School entities do not connect enough with the community which results in a lack of understanding of expectations and gaps in understanding mindsets. Need to focus on connecting with the community, empowering community partnerships and focusing on the whole child.

**Current Systemic Structure:** Current systemic structures of school entities do not always support the needs of families and communities and do not reflect diverse perspectives or cultures.

### Recommendations to Achieve

School entities should consider developing an equity plan that reflects their school community, including distribution of the plan, action plans and a yearly report. The plan should include specific lists of activities and meetings with the school and community, as evidenced by meeting minutes, advertisements (posters, online listings) and sign-in sheets.

School entities should conduct a diversity study to gather community demographics and conduct staff and community cultural competency training as needed.

School entities should engage in outreach to the community, including actively recruiting staff who reflect the diverse cultures of the community.

### Further Reading and Discussion

PSBA Equity Toolkit

Excellence and Equity Committee – staff and community participation (Upper Dublin SD)

# The **Vision**

## Family and Community Engagement

### Visionary Goal

Increase opportunities and resources for parents, families and extended families to support students.

### Identified Obstacles

**Attitude and Lack of Will:** Schools could be redefined as the community hub. Communities should understand the purpose of the schools. Need to rebrand schools to focus on current programs and services and meeting the needs of the whole community.

**Identifying Resources and Needs:** Schools should conduct school climate surveys and develop systems to share best practices to meet the needs of all community members, including needs of families that include extended relatives and multigenerational families.

### Recommendations to Achieve

School entities should establish a process to:

- Analyze what programs and services are offered
- Identify needs of the community, including multigenerational needs, by using existing data and conducting outreach through surveys
- Establish focus groups for listening to the community
- Develop action plans for addressing programs and services with increased importance in order to decrease overall costs

Multigenerational programs and services should include:

- Listings of resources specific to the needs of identified groups, such as listings of daycare providers
- Child Find (for students with disabilities) and Early Intervention activities that specifically target groups within the community who may not be aware of programs and services through traditional methods

### Further Reading and Discussion

Parent University to engage and educate parents on their children's educational opportunities and overall needs: [Boston Public Schools](#)

[Pennsylvania School Climate Surveys \(PDE\)](#), including community surveys

[Strategies for Equitable Family Engagement](#) (State Support Network, American Institutes for Research)

[Luzerne County Foster Grandparent Program](#)

[U.S. Department of Health and Human Services information and resources on grandparents raising grandchildren](#)

# The **Vision**

## Family and Community Engagement

### Visionary Goal

**E**ncourage and educate local partners and the community to share student success and the positive stories of public education.

### Identified Obstacles

**Understanding the Benefits of Partnerships:** School entities struggle to build partnerships that promote student success and spread the good news about school entities. This is often because they fail to focus on positive stories and accomplishments. Schools have not focused on branding of the entity and need to develop an equity lens and sensitivity to reaching out to the diverse cultures in the community.

**Expanding Landscape of Engagement:** School entities struggle with developing partnerships and sharing student success partly because of the ever expanding and evolving landscape of engagement channels and opportunities. Schools should focus on strategic use of social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram and Twitter; building foundations; and building networks with community organizations and businesses.

### Further Reading and Discussion

Keystone Education Radio podcast on [Building a Foundation](#) (Warrior Run SD)

Sharing local school success stories: [Success Starts Here](#)

Keystone Crossroads: school district branding

[Social Media Use by School Districts](#) (National School Public Relations Assoc.)

### Recommendations to Achieve

School entities should build networks of partnerships that reflect the diversity of the community through:

- Reviewing current lists of partners and local businesses
- Creating new lists of potential partners such as local businesses, business groups, local and state government agencies, social service organizations, institutions of higher education, local intermediate units and neighboring school entities
- Building or enhancing a local education foundation
- Developing an annual report on partnerships published to the school community, to include information on the foundation, scholarships and sponsorships provided by local partners, recognition programs and listing of local assets and opportunities provided by partners

School entities should assess current use of social media and develop an annual report to share with the board on use of social media in the school entity, policy or procedures related to social media use by the school entity, data and statistics and use by student organizations or PTA/PTO groups.

School entities should provide training opportunities to staff, student organizations and school-related groups on appropriate use of social media to promote student success and the brand of the school entity.

# The **Vision**

## Family and Community Engagement

### Visionary Goal

**E**mulate successful community school models where families can access services within schools as the community center, where appropriate. Develop ways to respond to students whose basic needs are not being met.

### Identified Obstacles

**Lack of Connection and Ability to Access:** School entities struggle with identifying quality, reputable organizations and agencies to provide services and finding the right model(s) to deliver these services, especially in rural areas.

### Identifying Students and Families and Providing

**Assistance:** Serving students and families who need access to basic health, food, medical and social services requires school entities to accurately identify students and families in need and convince them to take advantage of services offered. This means overcoming the stigma of shame, dispelling misconceptions and listening to the needs of students and families.

### Recommendations to Achieve

School entities should create an organization or committee that identifies, assesses and promotes community resources for use through the schools or individually by families.

School entities should conduct an anonymous, baseline inventory survey to assess the needs of students and families in their community. The survey should be accessible through various means and languages, reflecting the diversity of the community. Both families and service providers in the community should be included.

School entities should develop relationships and strategies to form ongoing, reciprocal connections with local service organizations and should develop a resource guide for families that is responsive to the needs of diverse communities, respectful and lists available organizations as part of a welcome kit to the school entity.

### Further Reading and Discussion

Community organizations pooling resources and connecting agencies and organizations, including schools:

- [Better Together of Lebanon County](#)
- [Trying Together—Pittsburgh area](#)

[Communities in Schools Model](#)

[Family Support Programs \(PDE\)](#)

[Parent and Community Resource guide \(Huntingdon Area SD\)](#)





# The **Vision**

## Family and Community Engagement

### Visionary Goal

**C**reate opportunities and encourage alumni to contribute to the education process.

### Identified Obstacles

**Keeping Track:** Maintaining accurate data on alumni and their current contact information is an enormous challenge for many school entities, particularly as they move out of the area, change names, etc.

**Loyalty:** School entities have difficulty in developing and maintaining a culture of loyalty to the school entity and creating a desire to give back.

### Further Reading and Discussion

#### Alumni Website

(Mechanicsburg Area SD) with online form to collect information, giving and scholarship opportunities, reunion information, annual newsletters

Lewisburg Area High School Alumni Association Heritage Room (Lewisburg Area SD)

### Recommendations to Achieve

School entities should develop online platforms and databases that connect to the school's main website to collect and maintain alumni data. This platform could include forms or surveys to easily collect demographic data and information on alumni's postsecondary education, career and community involvement achievements.

School entities should strive to build a culture of loyalty through:

- Celebrating the accomplishments of alumni to build school spirit and pride and advertise future learning opportunities to students
- Highlighting alumni as contributing members of the school community not just taxpayers or donors
- Establishing an alumni speaker series to focus on career pathways or college experiences

Develop an alumni club and encourage alumni to give back to their alma mater or pay it forward to the public school where they live.



# The **Vision**

## Family and Community Engagement

### Visionary Goal

**S**upport family and community engagement in education by:

- Removing language barriers
- Providing opportunities for collaboration
- Communicating in a timely manner through multiple platforms
- Communicating about early childhood education opportunities and services
- Including family members in literacy and other school programs

### Identified Obstacles

#### **Language and Culture Communication Bias:**

It is difficult to ensure materials are translated into all applicable languages represented in the school community and that multiple platforms are used to reach all community members.

**Lack of Access:** There is a lack of access to affordable, quality early childhood education opportunities in many areas. This is either because there are limited numbers of providers or costs result in lack of access by some community members.

**Staffing/Funding:** It is difficult to find passionate staff or community members to provide programs and services. School entities lack financial resources to provide programs and outreach and may not have experienced grant writers to obtain additional funding through existing channels competitively.

### Recommendations to Achieve

School entities should partner with local agencies, organizations and businesses by holding events to meet parents and families where they are, to promote available opportunities and provide educational materials in multiple languages and formats. This could include:

- Attending local business, agency and organization events to provide school entity information to attendees
- Establishing a directory of businesses, agencies and organizations
- Working with PTA/PTO organizations
- Establishing a school-parent liaison
- Identifying and securing grant funding for school personnel to work with these partnerships

School entities should develop definitions and expectations for quality early childhood education and kindergarten readiness programs based on Pennsylvania's Early Learning Standards and share those with parents, families, and local providers and organizations.

School entities should actively recruit staff that reflect the school community and are able to connect culturally and speak languages represented by the community.

Additional resources should be identified through community agencies or private services to provide translation of materials and/or in-person translation for families attending school meetings. This could include phone line translation services.

### Further Reading and Discussion

PDE provides resources for translation of some educational documents through an [online school document translation service](#) (phone translation options also)

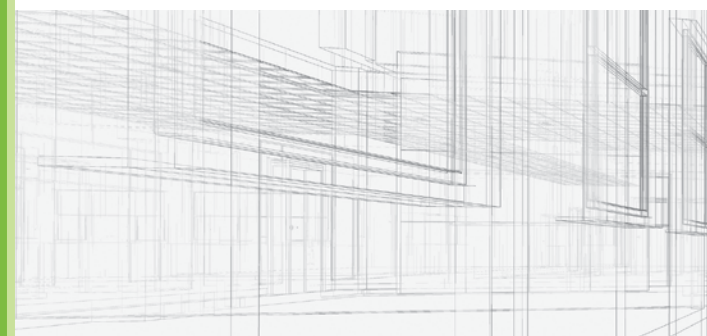
U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, [resources and information for parents/families](#)

U.S. Department of Justice, [resources and lists of translation associations and organizations](#)

[Interpretation and Translation services provided by district staff \(Reading SD\)](#)

[The Pennsylvania Family Engagement Birth through College, Career, Community Ready Framework](#)  
(PA Office of Child Development and Early Learning)

[Pennsylvania's Early Learning Standards](#)



# The **Vision**

## Citizens and Policymaking

### Visionary Goal

**E**ducate and empower the school community to advocate for equitable funding and public policy that enhances public schools and learning opportunities for all students.

### Identified Obstacles

**Understanding Data:** It is difficult to educate the school community on understanding school entity data and the school funding formula.

### Identifying/Communicating with Stakeholders:

School entities need to identify key contacts, communicators and organizations that share the priorities and recommendations of the school entity and can communicate with legislators. There are often conflicting interests.

**Identifying the Issues:** It can be difficult to understand which laws or public policies are impacting the school entity most negatively in order to advocate for change—i.e., tax reform, mandate relief, charter school considerations.

### Recommendations to Achieve

Invite legislators and other education stakeholders to visit schools and events in order to experience student and school achievements firsthand. Inform them about local schools' successes and challenges in order to develop relationships and advocacy platforms.

Work with state organizations, such as PSBA, PASA, PA Association of School Business Officials (PASBO), PAIU, etc., to identify resources and talking points to share with school directors and the community quarterly on issues impacting education, and data and information on equitable funding.

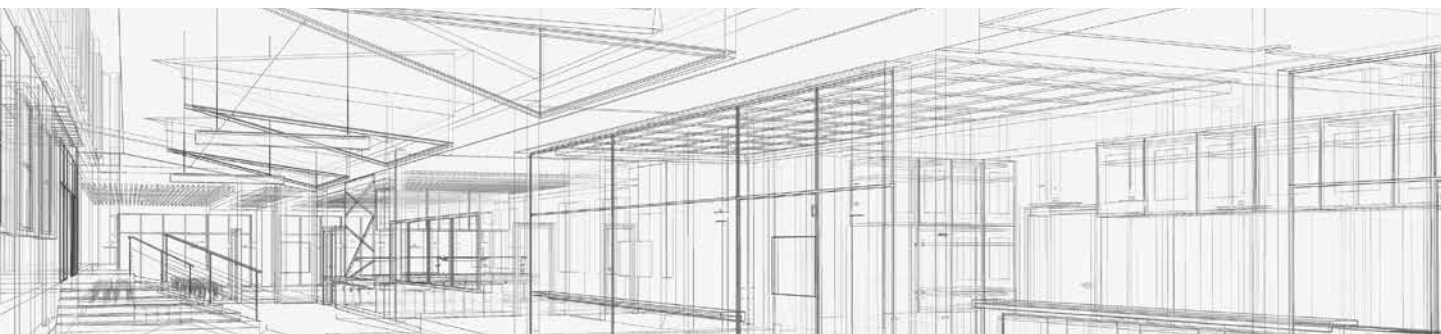
Provide a directory for citizens to contact your local, state and federal legislators and regulatory agencies.

Identify local businesses, organizations or agencies with similar priorities and develop a list of advocacy partners in your community based on specific local issues—i.e., libraries on universal digital access, local law enforcement agencies on school safety.

### Further Reading and Discussion

[PA State of Education report](#)

[PA School Boards Association “Take Action” resources](#) for alerts to public education issues and information on contacting legislators



# The **Vision**

## Financial Resources

### Visionary Goal

**A**llocate state, federal and local education funds to equitably serve the needs of all students. Address the loss of state financial resources as well as the increasing costs of education resulting from cost of living growth and increasing mandates.

### Identified Obstacles

It will be difficult to disassemble and redraft the many areas of School Code to address equitable funding in all areas. For example, statutes written specifically about transportation make it difficult to account for general efficiencies.

The state is not adequately funding education. The limited amount of state funding means school entities are competing for resources against other school entities, libraries, human service agencies, etc.

The state education funding structure should base funding levels on providing sufficient funding for student instruction as the core educational element. Additional funding should be based on needs for facilities, pension, mandates, etc.

There is a lack of flexibility in financing resources, such as conflict between reporting Average Daily Membership and providing for dual enrollment tuition programs.

Unfunded and Underfunded Mandates: The cost of mandates leads to cutting programs, staffing and eliminating co-curricular opportunities.

### Recommendations to Achieve

The state should establish reliable and predictable buckets for funding to provide more flexibility rather than fragmentation of funding allocations.

Establish a statewide conversation with school administrators, school directors, intermediate unit directors and other leaders to discuss what's happening with education funding to encourage and promote change.

The state should increase the amount of funding going into the Basic Education Formula for more equitable distribution.

State and federal agencies that impose mandates should be required to establish funding mechanisms to provide financial resources for enacting those mandates.

The state should address charter school and cyber charter school funding reform.

The state should research and consider reallocating lottery proceeds to public education as is done in many other states.

The state should consider additional taxes on tobacco, nicotine products, CBD and alcohol to put into a fund for education grants.

### Further Reading and Discussion

PSBA information on [Adequate Funding](#)

“More PA school districts feeling the crunch of mandated expenses, according to survey”

PA Lottery Spending





# The **Vision**

## Financial Resources

### Visionary Goal

**C**ollaborate with other school entities, agencies and organizations to provide resources that allow every student to access high-quality educational programs and services that facilitate learning.

### Identified Obstacles

Geographic and demographic resource limitations create obstacles—i.e., lack of Internet access based on availability of connectivity in certain regions or cost of connectivity, transportation challenges in geographically large school entities hinder participation in some activities.

### Recommendations to Achieve

Develop partnerships with intermediate units, libraries and other organizations or consortiums for funding of specific programs on a regional basis—i.e., technology, early childhood education—that allows pooling of funds. This reduces duplication of efforts and allows regional decision-making to more equitably provide resources to students.

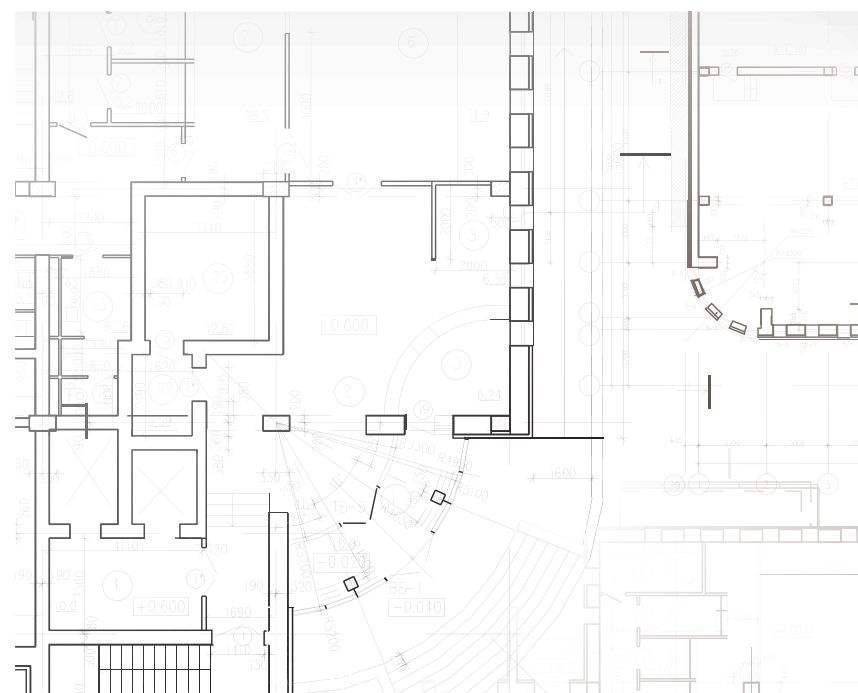
Establish consortiums or partnerships that research and acquire grant funding for specific programs that are beneficial to the school community rather than being funded completely through the school entity.

### Further Reading and Discussion

Catalog local businesses, libraries and organizations that provide free or low-cost Internet options within your school entity to bridge the digital gap for families (Wissahickon SD)

STEM Ecosystems – Lancaster County STEM Alliance

Developing School Partnership Agreements (SD of Philadelphia)



# The **Vision** Financial Resources

## Visionary Goal

**F**ully fund special education requirements at the state and federal levels.

## Identified Obstacles

Cost of implementation and statutory requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and state regulations is an overwhelming obstacle.

When a student with a disability is educated in another location, there are often unanticipated costs for school entities—i.e., intermediate unit program, partial hospitalization.

Abuse of the system results in allocating funding where it may not be needed.

Medical services mandated by IDEA create additional costs.

## Recommendations to Achieve

School entities and the state should advocate for full funding at the federal level. Funding from federal allocations should go directly to the school entity.

IDEA should be re-evaluated, reauthorized and fully funded.

School entities should consider reaching out to other agencies and organizations to research effective special education practices and technology within their community prior to investing limited funds into expensive methods or equipment.

## Further Reading and Discussion

*Still Shortchanging Children With Disabilities: State Underfunding of Special Education Continues* (Education Law Center and PA Schools Work)



(graphic from PSBA)

United Cerebral Palsy of Central PA—resource lending library for assistive technology

## Visionary Goal

**R**evise state funding mechanisms to provide stronger support for career-ready education.

## Identified Obstacles

Career exploration does not have funding specifically allocated. Students need more exposure to career opportunities earlier in the school program.

Programs are not designed to be goal-oriented.

School entities are competing for the same educational funding.

## Recommendations to Achieve

School entities should partner with industries that benefit from the career and/or technical program to provide funding through sponsorships or foundation giving. Consider partnering with unions as well to provide sponsorships or donations for equipment.

The state or local government should provide tax rebates for businesses that help with school entity job shadowing/career education programs.

School entities should establish workforce development programs.

## Further Reading and Discussion

**Team Pennsylvania**—connecting private and public sector to promote career exploration and provide grant opportunities

Junior Achievement:

- Western PA
- South Central PA
- Northeastern PA
- Southeastern PA

# The **Vision**

## Financial Resources

### Visionary Goal

**E**stablish a mechanism to evaluate federal and state mandates on a regular basis to ensure that they serve the needs of all students and are adequately funded.

### Identified Obstacles

**Political Resistance:** Some mandates have strong supporters who will advocate maintaining them and resist evaluation.

Schools represent a location of access for the community. Many mandates are related to social services that are imposed on schools and assumed to be part of their overall funding.

### Recommendations to Achieve

School entities should strongly advocate for funding of mandates and reevaluation of programs that obligate state or federal agencies to quantify the need for the mandate and expenditure limits.

State and federal agencies must collect and publish data on the costs of mandated requirements to the state and local entities required to comply as well as provide data on the results of the mandate—i.e., number of individuals impacted.

### Further Reading and Discussion

Unfunded Mandates Reform Act: History, Impact, and Issues  
(Congressional Research Service)

### Visionary Goal

**E**xplore the possibility of increased efficiencies in contracting with local businesses, agencies and organizations to fulfill noneducational functions of the school entity for a reduced cost or greater efficiency in the procurement of services.

### Identified Obstacles

There is sometimes additional cost for local businesses to comply with School Code or requirements of school entities.

**Business Incentives:** Local agencies and businesses question what is in it for them.

**Lack of Available Participants:** There is geographic inequity of the number of available businesses in some regions.

There is a lack of standards or oversight for qualifications of partnerships or participation.

### Further Reading and Discussion

**COSTARS**  
(PA Cooperative Purchasing through Department of General Services)

### Recommendations to Achieve

School entities should explore ways to incentivize partnerships with local businesses. Not all partnerships must be based on funds that go directly to school; tax rebates or other options from state and federal government programs could be considered.

State and local agencies or officials should establish certified programs. This would require meeting certain standards to be qualified to receive incentives.

School entities should ensure that requests for proposals (RFPs) on bids or quotations are separated appropriately to account for the abilities of local contractors or should allow processes to bid on a piece of an RFP where appropriate.

School entities should extend partnerships or consortiums with other school entities for cooperative purchasing and provision of services, such as transportation.

Legislators should establish improved communication with state agencies—i.e., PDE, PA Commission on Crime and Delinquency—to ensure that resources and guidance will be available prior to mandated implementation timelines to reduce costs for school entities on implementation.

# Current Practices to Consider

This list includes examples of some exemplary practices school entities may consider implementing now to move forward with the Commonwealth Education Blueprint vision. It is not an all-inclusive list, but it is designed to provide actionable short-term steps in implementing the vision, while working toward the broader long-term goals.

## Teaching and Learning

**E**nhance support for co-curricular activities and before- and after-school programs that foster student innovation, physical activity, teamwork, mental health and mindfulness and talent development.

### Recommendations and Examples of Achievement

Open campus idea for co-curricular activities. More connections for students and new sphere of friends.

Partnering with career and technical centers for co-curricular programs.

Before-school opportunities based on teacher talents or community talents—i.e., yoga at start of the day; scouting/JROTC program with flag raising and handling training before school.

Remove duplication of effort in sports teams with club sports organizations. Streamlining this could get revenue pumped into school entity teams with partnerships and would break down barriers with national programs and partnerships.

Empower student voice and streamline activities to meet their interests, such as conducting student surveys to determine school clubs.

Develop an Esports program.

**D**evelop school connectedness and increase student success by fostering positive relationships between teachers and other school leaders and the students they serve.

### Recommendations and Examples of Achievement

Every school entity should administer the [PA school climate survey](#) or other research-based school climate survey annually based on its needs and include the data in the annual school safety and security board report to develop strategies to address school climate.

## Citizens and Policymaking

**D**emonstrate and communicate the positive impact of investments in public education on society, including economic development, workforce development and international competitiveness.

### Recommendations and Examples of Achievement

Educate the public on the successes of your schools, students, staff and families and increase the perception of their value among citizens and communities.

Develop a marketing strategy to promote your school entity, including the successes of your students and staff both while enrolled and post-graduation.

Use school entity data to promote how the schools benefit the community—i.e., number of jobs provided, number of local businesses contracting and providing for services and supplies, amount of funding spent within the local community.



# Current Practices to Consider

## Family and Community Engagement

**B**uild parent and family involvement and capacity that encourages and supports early learning preparedness for the whole child.

### Recommendations and Examples of Achievement

Develop a community resource book that provides information on community providers, agencies and organizations that offer and support childcare and early childhood education opportunities. Share with parents and families during school events, through Early Intervention, with community childcare and early childhood education providers and at kindergarten screening.

Work with the PTA/PTO and/or Title I Parent Advisory Committee for your school to incorporate [early learning standards](#) and early learning preparedness activities into the school environment and calendar.

Employ social media to share information about resources on early learning preparedness with the school community.

**E**mploy systems for timely communication and collaboration with parents and families.

### Recommendations and Examples of Achievement

Systems should ensure that parents and families have opportunities to:

- Be informed in an efficient manner.
- Share in decision-making within school communities.
- Receive information about community health and wellness resources.
- Play an active role in reinforcing learning at home.
- Make better-informed decisions regarding school-based programming for their students, including in-school and co-curricular arts, music, languages, athletics, clubs, libraries and more.
- Become full partners in the education of their children.

Consider use of automated platforms for emails, phone calls and/or text messages that keep parents and families informed in a timely manner on school announcements and events. These should be separate from channels used for emergency and safety communication.

**E**mphasize the importance and development of all student voices by ensuring there are opportunities for students to share their ideas with school and community leadership.

### Recommendations and Examples of Achievement

Appoint student representatives to the School Board, and on advisory committees and other school-related organization boards and committees.

Establish student focus groups and forums on local community issues to give students a voice.

Establish digital outreach, such as online news or video news, with appropriate staff support to provide students with a voice in their own environment and to ensure student opinions are respectful and respected.

Issue school climate surveys to students to ensure their voices and concerns are heard in relation to school environment.

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