

# SIMSBURY HIGH SCHOOL

## Continuous Improvement Plan 2018-2019



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*Teaching students to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow with  
confidence and integrity*

**Preparation ~ Passion ~ Personal Growth**

**SIMSBURY HIGH SCHOOL**  
**Continuous Improvement Plan**  
**2018-2019**

**Introduction**

Simsbury High School is deeply committed to the continuous improvement process, and this formal plan represents a roadmap that will enable us to move towards the achievement of our core values and beliefs.

The students and staff members of Simsbury High School continue to distinguish themselves in the classroom, on the field, and in our community. Improvements to our facility, course offerings, and teaching practices have yielded significant growth in student achievement and can be attributed to a steadfast dedication to our core values and beliefs of preparation, passion, and personal growth. Our cycle of continuous improvement anchors our work by focusing our attention on key indicators of student achievement, professional growth, and the safety and social emotional well-being of all of the members of our learning community. Given the tremendous success that Simsbury High School has experienced, we expect that this year's plan will provide the framework that will allow us to continue the proud tradition of excellence that makes Simsbury High School such a great place to learn and work.

Each year, the Continuous Improvement Plan outlines two different kinds of work that is happening in the school. First, we outline improvement indicators, where our school describes its connection to the goals established by the Board of Education. Second, we monitor quality indicators – statistical markers that remain consistent over the years and allow us to compare performance in key areas with data from the recent past.

**Improvement Indicators**

Improvement indicators describe the most important priorities of the Simsbury Public Schools for the next year. In the spring of 2014, the administrative council and the Board of Education undertook a process to build a short list of areas of focus. These indicators are ambitious goals that will not be easy to achieve, but will push our staff and students to grow and improve beyond our current high levels of performance. This year, our goals are established in the following categories: 1) college and career readiness, 2) positive social choices and supportive relationships, and 3) the development of a strong professional culture.

**Quality Indicators**

Our most critical priorities are stated in the Improvement Indicators featured on this Continuous Improvement Plan. However, there are many other indicators which allow us to monitor the quality of services and achievement at Simsbury High School. All of the other indicators that we monitor are called "Quality Indicators." Our goal is to continue to maximize the growth of our students and staff members relative to these indicators. The Quality Indicators, along with current and baseline performance, can be found in the final pages of this document.

# District Vision for the Simsbury Public Schools

The Simsbury Public Schools cultivate the mind, body, and character of each student. We engage students with a meaningful and rigorous academic foundation so that they can contribute to a global society with integrity, compassion, and resilience.



## Core Beliefs

We believe in...

- ★ Challenging expectations
- ★ High standards
- ★ Passion for lifelong learning
- ★ Academic and extracurricular experiences that emphasize intellectual, physical, artistic, and social/emotional well-being
- ★ Collaboration and communication among families and school personnel
- ★ Building relationships between staff, students, and community
- ★ Family and community partnerships
- ★ Continuous improvement and excellence





# SIMSBURY HIGH SCHOOL

## Core Values and Beliefs

# Preparation

We provide a rich and rigorous academic foundation for all students.

- We emphasize the meaningful application of knowledge and skills within the curriculum.
- We implement teaching methods designed to promote both critical thinking and creativity and to engage students in shared ownership for learning.
- We ensure that students of all abilities are included, challenged, and given appropriate instruction in preparation for college and careers.

### SHS Learning Expectations for College & Career Readiness

Within the Simsbury High School curriculum, students are expected to demonstrate understanding of each course's Essential Learning Outcomes (ELOs). Teachers have explicitly defined these ELOs as the skills and "big ideas" that are central to an understanding of the discipline. In addition, students must have opportunities to practice and to demonstrate mastery of the following SHS Learning Expectations:

- Read and comprehend complex texts independently
- Develop and strengthen writing skills
- Construct arguments that are supported by evidence
- Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them
- Conduct short and sustained research
- Evaluate/critique the work of self and others
- Use technology and digital media strategically and responsibly
- Demonstrate personal responsibility and ethical behavior (Trojan Code)

# Passion

We offer diverse learning experiences that encourage students to discover and to develop their unique interests and talents.

- We provide an elective program characterized by wide variety and high quality.
- We present students with opportunities to connect and to excel as they explore a broad range of extra-curricular activities.
- We give students opportunities for choice—in the classroom, during course selection, and throughout extra-curricular pursuits.

# Personal Growth

We partner with families to promote character in our students as they develop into ethical and compassionate adults.

- We expect that all members of the school community will demonstrate the tenets of the Trojan Code: respect, honor, and responsibility.
- We provide students opportunities both to work collaboratively and to develop their potential as leaders.
- We guide students toward active citizenship, including service to a larger community.

Teaching students to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow with confidence and integrity

Revised 2014. Next revision scheduled 2019.



## **School Description**

Simsbury High school has the distinction of being one of the highest performing high schools in the country. The tireless pursuit of excellence continues to yield positive results in our classrooms and on the field. The accomplishments earned by our students can be attributed to the hard work of our faculty members who benefit greatly from the support of our parents and community members. Collectively we are able to promote the growth of the exceptional students that call our school home.

The Core Values and Beliefs of Simsbury High School are based upon three tenets: preparation, passion, and personal growth. This foundational document explains the shared commitments that we have with our students and the greater community, while also serving as a compass guiding our educational planning and decision making. The members of the Simsbury High School learning community are dedicated to preparing our students for success by first working to identify their passion and then fostering their personal growth through authentic learning experiences. It is this combination of support, challenge, and the shared pursuit of excellence that sets our school apart from others and makes it such an invigorating place for learning to occur. As you review the information contained within this document, you will see a record of accomplishments that serve as tangible markers of our success and notes that identify areas of focus for the future. This process of data collection and reflection sets the stage for our cycle of continuous improvement moving forward.

Thank you for taking the time to review this report. However, to fully appreciate the work that occurs at Simsbury High School I would like to encourage you to visit our school. Once you have the opportunity to experience one of our plays, hear the written word of our students, see their excitement as they work to solve problems creatively, and observe the sportsmanship displayed by our athletes, you will have a much better understanding and appreciation of what makes this school so special.

Simsbury High School is a place unlike any other, and I am honored to serve the students, staff, and community members as their principal.

Sincerely,

Andrew O'Brien  
Principal  
***Go Trojans!***

## Description of School-Based Leadership Teams

The cycle of continuous improvement at Simsbury High School is conducted collaboratively through the use of a variety of teams focused on teaching, learning, and school culture. Below you will find a brief description of some of the key groups in our school community that are responsible for carrying out the work necessary to achieve the goals we have identified.

- Professional Learning Communities – Every teacher at Simsbury High School is assigned to a weekly PLC, usually by discipline and grade level. Members of each PLC agree upon common course outcomes for students, develop assessments to measure those outcomes, and analyze student work as a way to improve instruction and refine curriculum.
- SHS Administrative Team – The principal, three assistant principals, the athletic director, and the school resource officer meet formally each week to monitor continuous improvement priorities and plan for upcoming work related to our school goals.
- Department Supervisors – The leaders of our departments meet three times each month to discuss: initiatives related to the work of their departments, student assessment data, curriculum development, the supervision and evaluation of teachers, and many other teaching and learning items.
- School Culture Task Force – Representatives from each department meet with the administrative team monthly to discuss improvements related to school procedures, policies, and initiatives. The group plays an important part in our efforts to enhance school culture.
- Student Parent Teacher Council – The SPTC is the primary vehicle for the principal to conduct two-way dialogue with the parent community. The principal provides monthly updates to the group about school improvement efforts and solicits feedback about their perceptions.
- Leadership Team – The principal convenes a team consisting of students, parents, teachers, administrators, and a community representative that meets five times during the year. Typically, this group focuses on a major issue that needs attention in the school, ranging from academic leveling to student stress to improvements in technology. During the 2018-19 school year, the Leadership Team will continue the work completed by the faculty schedule committee in order to create a new 8-period schedule for consideration in the 2019-2020 school year or beyond.

## Indicator #4: Student Achievement – High School

### Focus Area 4:

All students will be prepared for college and career success, as measured by:

- SAT School Day (11<sup>th</sup>): a percentage of students receiving 530 or better in math and 480 in critical reading, as well as earning 1010 or better composite score.
- AP:
  - percentage of students taking at least one AP class before graduating, and
  - percentage of test takers receiving 3 or higher
- GPA (12<sup>th</sup>):
  - percentage of students at 2.67 (B-) or higher
- College enrollment & graduation:
  - Percentage of graduating seniors enrolled in college the fall immediately after graduation
  - Percentage of graduating seniors completing a college degree within 6 years

### Strategy / What must occur to accomplish the goal: (If/Then)

- If we deliver a rigorous curriculum across all grades and levels for literacy and mathematics, then students will be prepared to perform at their best capacity when taking significant college entrance exams, such as the SAT, which is a proven indicator of college and career readiness.
- If teachers, counselors, and administrators continue to identify and encourage students who have the potential to succeed in Advanced Placement coursework, then more students will accept the challenge of completing at least one college-level course prior to graduation.
- If teachers and administrators set goals about AP exam performance that target the specific courses where SHS can realize significant improvement, then the overall percentage of students earning a 3 or higher on AP exams will increase.
- If we continue to provide both a rigorous curriculum and post-secondary planning that emphasizes the importance of continued education beyond high school, then we will prepare and encourage more students to enroll in college and successfully complete their degree.
- If we clearly define highly-effective teaching along with a system to regularly monitor it –*PLC-Based rounds model*, then teachers will have greater focus in identifying a problem of practice, observing colleagues, collecting evidence, providing feedback, and ongoing reflection for improvement.
- If we utilize PLCs and the Student Intervention Team (SIT) process to monitor the effectiveness of interventions, then student performance will improve.

**SMART Goal: Specific / Measureable / Aggressive yet Achievable / Relevant / Time-bound**

**SMART Goals:**

- **SAT School Day (11<sup>th</sup>)**
  - 75% receiving 530 in Math
  - 88% receiving 480 in Reading
  - 75% receiving 1010 Composite
- **AP (2018):**
  - 76% of seniors taking at least one AP class before graduating
  - 83% of test takers receiving 3 or higher
- **GPA (12<sup>th</sup>)**
  - 82% of graduating seniors earning a final GPA of at least 2.67 (B-)
- **College enrollment & graduation**
  - College enrollment: 91% of graduating seniors enrolled in college the fall immediately after graduation (Class of 2018)
  - College Graduation: 74% of graduating seniors completing a college degree within 6 years (Class of 2013)



## Indicator #5: Student Achievement – Positive Choices

### Focus Area 5:

All students will demonstrate positive social choices at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, as measured by:

- Increased percentage of students receiving school-based positive student recognition
- Increased percentage of students with one or no office referrals
- The number of students and staff members who participate in the “Pay it Forward” initiative
- Percentage of students earning Trojan Code recognition at SHS

### Strategy / What must occur to accomplish the goal: (If/Then)

- If we reinforce the tenants of good character in each school’s Character Education program, then all students will demonstrate respectful behaviors and improve their sense of social and emotional security in school.
- If systems are monitored/created to track recognition for positive social choices and interventions for behaviors that require correction, then character/climate committees can develop action plans to address specific school-based needs.
- If students are provided with opportunities to show kindness to others within their school and community, then the likelihood that intentional and spontaneous acts of kindness will increase.

### SMART Goal: Specific / Measureable / Aggressive yet Achievable / Relevant / Time-bound

#### SMART Goals:

- 50% of students will receive school-based positive behavioral recognition through Trojan Code tickets
- 92% of students at the secondary level will have 1 or no office referrals
- Raise \$500 for charity as a result of student and staff members participating in the Pay it Forward initiative
- 89% of students will receive the Trojan Code Distinction

## Indicator #6: Professionalism - Highly Effective Teaching and Leading

### Focus Area 6:

Highly effective teaching in every classroom supported by highly effective instructional leaders in every school building, as measured by:

- Leader: Administrators and department supervisors will engage teachers in professional development experiences with a focus on meeting the needs of all learners. Administrators will support teachers in the use of those strategies and understandings over the course of the school year to increase student performance
- Teacher: Teachers will create learning targets and will use them with their classes on a regular basis. This work will occur within departments and teachers will engage in observations of their peers as they adopt this powerful practice

### Strategy / What must occur to accomplish the goal: (If/Then)

- If highly effective teaching strategies are well defined along with a system to regularly monitor it (*school-based and PLC-based rounds model*); then educators will have greater focus in collecting evidence, providing feedback, and ongoing reflection for improvement in instructional practice that positively impacts student learning.
- If standards of highly effective teaching are clearly defined (with a focus on Instruction/Service Delivery Standard #4, Planning Standard #3, and Assessment Standard #5) and leading (with a focus on PE #2 Teaching & Learning) by building common language across the district for teachers and leaders; then we will have a greater ability to identify and promote highly effective teaching and leading practices.
- If administrators and teachers develop their understanding of research-based practices for improving student achievement, utilize them with fidelity in their classes, and focus upon student performance data in order to make necessary adjustments to their instruction, then we will see improvements in student performance and a reduction in the achievement gap as more of our students find success.
- If teachers create learning targets that clearly explain what their students are expected to know and be able to do, share them with their students, formatively assess progress towards reaching those targets, and make adjustments to their instruction as needed, then improvements in teacher practice and student performance will occur.
- If teachers evaluate their mid- and end-of-course assessments, and work together within their PLC to closely review the performance of their students, then they will be able to make adjustments to their assessments, collaboratively assess the skill development of their students, provide actionable feedback, and make adjustments to their instruction that will result in greater student achievement moving forward.
- If evaluators develop their skill in designing rigorous and targeted student learning objectives (SLOs) that measure growth over time; share this skill with teachers as they develop their plans for SLO(s); then teachers will engage in skillful instruction to move student learning to higher levels.
- If student learning related to individual educators' instructional practices is measured, as well as grade level and district performance; then educators will identify students who are improving, celebrate and share best practices, as well as identify and support educators whose students are not exhibiting the expected learning outcomes as defined through our curriculum-based and standardized assessments.

**SMART Goals:**

**Leader:**

Administrators will ensure the growth of our department supervisors by providing them with learning experiences, resources, and opportunities to collaborate with one another to strengthen their professional competencies as the instructional leaders of their departments.

Department supervisors will provide the necessary structure and support for their teachers to enable them to review their exams.

**Teacher:**

By the end of the year, all teachers will be able to create learning targets and will use them with their classes on a regular basis. This work will occur within departments and teachers will engage in observations of their peers as they adopt this powerful practice.

Teacher volunteers will be sought out to serve as learning target experts who can then provide additional support to teachers within their department and across disciplines through informal meetings or observations of their practice.

Teachers will evaluate the level of cognitive demand of their mid-term and final exams, and make necessary changes to those assessments in order to ensure that they are rigorous and provide opportunities for students to apply critical skills to novel situations.

## Indicator #7: Student Safety and Social/Emotional Well-Being

### Focus Area 7:

Stakeholders express satisfaction with the district’s efforts related to safety and social/emotional well-being, as measured by:

- Percentages of students responding favorably on the following Social/Emotional Security Indicators:
  - “If a student is bullied in school, how difficult is it for him or her to get help from an adult?”
  - “Overall, how much do you feel like you belong at your school?”
  - “How much respect do students at your school show you?”
  - “Overall, how safe do you feel at your school?”
- Percentages of stakeholders (staff and parents) responding favorably to the following Student Safety Indicators:
  - “Overall, how safe do you feel as a teacher at this school?” (staff)
  - “Overall, how safe does your child feel at this school?” (parents)

### Strategy / What must occur to accomplish the goal: (If/Then)

- If students are provided a safe, physical environment in school, then they will be able to concentrate/actively engage in their learning.
- If students feel they are in schools with positive school climates, then they will be able to devote more time to their learning.
- If faculty and staff of the Simsbury Public Schools define and implement specific, measurable actions to address the physical and social/emotional security of students, then there will be an increase in positive school climate and students will feel safer in school.

### SMART Goals:

As evidenced by the results from the Spring Survey, favorability percentages will increase:

Secondary Students Indicator	2015 Favorability %	2017 Favorability %	2018 Goal Favorability%	2019 Goal Favorability%
If a student is bullied in your school, how difficult is it for him/her to get help from an adult?	61	67	67.7	70
Overall, how much do you feel like you belong at your school?	55	45	48	55
How much respect do students at your school show you?	54	44	50.6	55
Overall, how safe do you feel at your school?	78	81	79.9	82

Faculty and Parents Indicator	2015 Favorability %	2017 Favorability %	2018 Goal Favorability%	2019 Goal Favorability%
Overall, how safe do you feel as a teacher at this school? (faculty)	95	92	N/A	95
The principal makes safety a priority. (parents)	91	N/A	N/A	91
Overall, how safe does your child feel at this school? (parents)	N/A	93	N/A	95

\* Note: We will plan to administer another District survey in the Spring of 2019 for all stakeholder groups.

## Indicator #8: Communication to Simsbury Stakeholders

### Focus Area 8:

Effectively engage stakeholders by communicating improvement efforts and providing opportunities to participate in the improvement process, as measured by:

- School-level action plans to address areas of concern that emerged from satisfaction surveys issued to staff, students, and parents in spring 2017.
- Student and staff morale

### Strategy / What must occur to accomplish the goal: (If/Then)

- If members of the school community feel more connected to each other and the building, then mutual respect will be established and the culture of the school will improve as a result of raised student and staff morale.

### SMART Goal: Specific / Measureable / Aggressive yet Achievable / Relevant / Time-bound

#### SMART Goals:

- Administrators and teachers will focus on goals and strategies to improve morale through activities that promote the development of supportive relationships and make meaningful improvements to the climate of our school during the 2018-2019 school year.

#### Action Steps:

- Communicate results from our recent Panorama Survey to staff members identifying the need to develop supportive relationships.
- Teachers will write goals that promote positive interactions, develop strong relationships, and increase the sense of belonging among all members of the SHS community.
- Department Supervisor action plans will include concrete steps to promote shared leadership and passion, and build supportive relationships within their department and across the school.
- The Diversity Committee will develop programs and activities for staff members and students to address the key areas that were identified by students during the 2017-2018 school year.
- Open lines of communication with the Trojan Code Committee will be maintained in order to assist in their efforts to promote more positive student behaviors and experiences.
- Student leadership organizations will be approached and asked to help develop activities and messages that will promote more acts of student to student kindness throughout the year.
- Student accomplishments and leaders will be updated in our main lobby display cases.
- A second class of inductees will be ushered into the Simsbury High School Hall of Fame.
- Departments will be encouraged to show more ownership in their regions of the school as well as developing displays to showcase student achievement and enthusiasm for their subject area.
- Administration will recognize birthdays of staff members, and personally congratulate individuals and departments following significant accomplishments.
- Administrators will continue to remind students to use the “THINK” acronym to guide their actions when using technology to communicate or post their ideas and feelings.
- Administrators will present a video to the class of 2022 that stresses their role in assuming responsibility for themselves and their actions in the hope that this will increase their success and pave the way for more positive interactions with their peers.



- Pep Rallies and school-wide events will be designed to maximize positive experiences by all and minimize disruptive behavior.
- Concerted efforts will be made to help students understand that they can reach out to any adult in the school for help if they feel that they are being bullied.
- Staff will recognize outstanding student and staff member achievement on a classroom and school-wide basis.

SIMSBURY HIGH SCHOOL QUALITY INDICATORS

**Enrollment Summary**

Enrollment Summary	2018 Current	Three-Year History		
		2017	2016	2015
Number of Graduates	340	360	359	372
Number of Graduates attending SHS for 4 years	312	310	333	343

**Academic Indicators**

SAT Performance (Juniors): CT Test Day		2018 Current	2017
Critical Reading & Writing	Simsbury	603.2	614
Mathematics	Simsbury	592.1	597
SAT Performance Seniors: Best Scores			
Critical Reading & Writing	Simsbury	627.6	608.1
Mathematics	Simsbury	619.7	607.1
Total	Simsbury	1247.3	1215.4

Advanced Placement	2018 Current	Three-Year History		
		2017	2016	2015
Percent of Seniors successfully completing at least one AP course before graduation	75.6	71	69	68
Total number of AP Exams taken (all students)	1060	1035	1039	947
Percent of AP Students scoring 3 or higher on at least one exam	85.6	81.6	82	79
Post-Secondary Plans		2018 Current	Three-Year History	
Percent of students pursuing four-year college	86.8	84.5	84.9	81.2
Percent of students pursuing two-year college	5.7	6.5	5.6	8
Percent of students accepted at Tier 1 colleges and universities (Barron's list)	23	23	17	20

Course Completion	2018 Current	Three-Year History		
		2017	2016	2015
Percent of students completing at least 3 credits of World Language	74.7	77	75	71
Percent of students completing Algebra 2 by graduation	92.3	94	95	92
Percent of students completing a math course beyond Algebra 2 by graduation	86.3	85	87	86
Number of students enrolled in Engineering	169	174	171	160
Number of students enrolled in Biomedical	228	232	250	199
Number of students enrolled in Visual Arts	393	384	371	448
Number of students enrolled in Music or Theater	356	356	345	328
Percent of students meeting or exceeding Grade 10 Connecticut Physical Fitness Standards	65	65	66	66
Other Quality Indicators		2018 Current	Three-Year History	
Special Education Prevalence Rate (percentage)	14.3	14.7	13.6	11.5

### Character Indicators

	2018 Current	Three-Year History		
		2017	2016	2015
Percent of students successfully completing the Honor Code	85	89	90.8	88.2
School Attendance Rates (average daily attendance)	95.76	96	95.8	95.7
School Attendance Rates (percent of students attending 95% of school days)	74.98	77.7	77	75.7
Percent of students with no disciplinary offenses	80.65	81.8	82.3	80.3
Percent of students with no more than one disciplinary offense	91.0	91.3	92.5	91.2
Total number of participants in interscholastic athletics	1,703	1,441	1,477	1,490

### PLC Questions (survey data)

Percent of Teachers who answered “agree” or “strongly agree” to the following statements on an annual survey:	2018 Current	Three-Year History		
		2017	2016	2015
My instructional practice has substantially improved as a result of participating in my primary PLC.	81.52	86.4	81.3	78.4
I have evidence that student learning is increasing as a result of the work of my primary PLC.	62.92	56.9	66.4	75.0