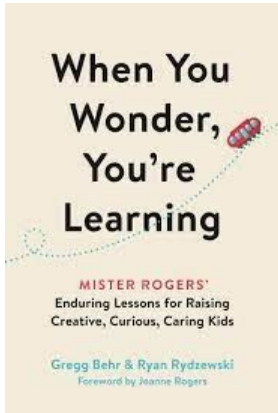




Superintendent's HOPE Note - November 2021

"It's not whether you get knocked down. It's whether you get up." - Vince Lombardi



The Learner in Us All

"Mistakes...are the things that power our learning. In fact, at the biological level, that's what learning is: a series of new neural pathways born of silent (and sometimes not-so-silent) struggle. Making mistakes– and then correcting them– is how we grow our brains and make new connections."

Excerpt from *When You Wonder, You're Learning: Mister Rogers' Enduring Lessons for Raising Creative, Curious, Caring Kids*

Our Challenge



Imagine a district in which every student is engaged in challenging, high-interest, authentic learning experiences and looks forward to returning to school each day. Imagine a district in which the learning opportunities are as varied as student backgrounds, affinities, and interests. As a school district, our greatest charge is to inspire, engage and teach children. The core of our work and the focus of our efforts should *always* be the learner. The learner is why we exist. We do not exist to teach *content*. We exist to teach the thousands of *learners* who depend on us each day.

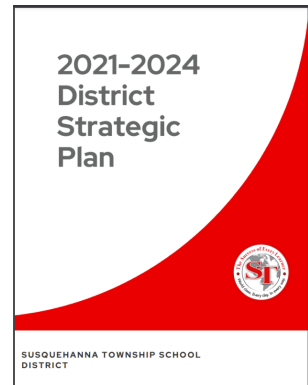
So what does it mean to truly be learner focused? It means that we examine curriculum to determine what students should know and be able to demonstrate. It means that we study the needs (i.e., student data) of each learner before we ever commence writing our lesson plans. Being radically learner focused simply means that the learner drives *all* that we do. It means that we both acknowledge and defy the notion that one size fits all. Our current educational model was developed to produce workers who could master a standard set of highly compartmentalized skills for use in an automated factory setting. Technology has rendered that mindset, a very fixed mindset, obsolete. The world needs a citizenry that can think critically, communicate effectively, collaborate globally and create exponentially. Are we producing that citizenry at Susquehanna Township School District? If not, why? I can think of a million reasons why we are not or cannot. And yet, we *must*.

As we transition to customized instruction for our learners, there will be plenty of opportunities to revert back to our old mindset and return to a system with which we are familiar. However, our learners deserve instruction that takes their individual needs into consideration, every single day. They deserve to be engaged in work that is rigorous, challenging and authentically connected to the real world.

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Visit the district's webpage to see the full [Strategic Plan](#)



The District's Strategic Plan: Leadership Goals

The strategic plan is developed around seven Critical Success Factors (CSFs) considered essential to the organization's capacity to remain competitive in the market. Factors include Leadership (LEAD), Teaching & Learning (T&L), Team Member Engagement & Recruitment (TME&R), Health, Safety & Security (HS&S), Facilities, Business & Support Operations (FB&SO), Technology (TECH), and Community Engagement (CE). Each month we will focus on one of the seven CSFs. This month's focus is Leadership.

Leadership

Leadership encompasses the district's capacity to communicate and integrate the organization's vision, mission, and core values. Through an annual survey entitled, *Are We Making Progress?* (AWMP), the district utilized research-based questions developed from a version of Gallup's Q¹² Employee Engagement Survey (www.gallup.com/home.aspx) to measure its progress toward its strategic objectives in leadership. During the previous strategic plan, the district saw a 13% increase from 2017-2020 in the number of team members reporting, *I know my organization's mission* and a 16.5% increase in the number reporting, *I know my organization's vision*. Over the next three years, the district will focus on deploying key work processes needed to operate the district more effectively and efficiently and more aggressively communicating the district's progress to all team members and stakeholders. Objectives, measures and targets for Leadership are reflected below.

| Critical Success Factor (CSF) Leadership (LEAD) |
|--|
| Strategic Objective(s): Create an environment to accomplish our mission and improve the district |
| Measures & Targets: <ul style="list-style-type: none">By May of 2024, 85% of staff will agree/strongly agree that they know how their work fits into the organization's overall measures of improvement as measured by the <i>Are We Making Progress</i> surveyBy May of 2024, 85% of staff will agree/strongly agree that district leaders share information about the organization as measured by the <i>Are We Making Progress</i> surveyBy June of 2024, 75% of key work processes, as measured by the <i>Key Process Families</i> document, will be defined, and deployed to staff and key stakeholders. |



Piece of the Puzzle

Please join me in celebrating Jen Halfond, Takia Colston-Krow and the members of our nursing staff for continuing to support us all during this unprecedented time. For the past 19 months, they have scheduled and staffed vaccination clinics for students, staff and the community, developed and regularly revised the district's Health and Safety Plan, drafted and deployed countless COVID-19 related communications, conducted contact tracing and onsite testing, and the list goes on! We are so grateful for their countless hours invested and dedication to keeping our safety a priority.