

Moon Area School District



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Strategic Plan **There is but ONE Moon**



10-point Strategic Plan



Instructionally, move Moon Area School District from among the top 10 percent of school districts in Pennsylvania to among the top one percent. Once there, stay there.



Regularly measure and report progress toward our goal of reaching and remaining among the top one percent of Pennsylvania school districts.



Attract and retain the finest teaching staff in Pennsylvania.



Meet the needs of special education students efficiently and effectively.



Become a recognized leader in guidance, school counseling, and gifted education by providing the tools and resources needed to achieve excellence.



Implement a technology strategy that focuses on putting technology in the hands of students in grades 3-12.



Ensure school safety.



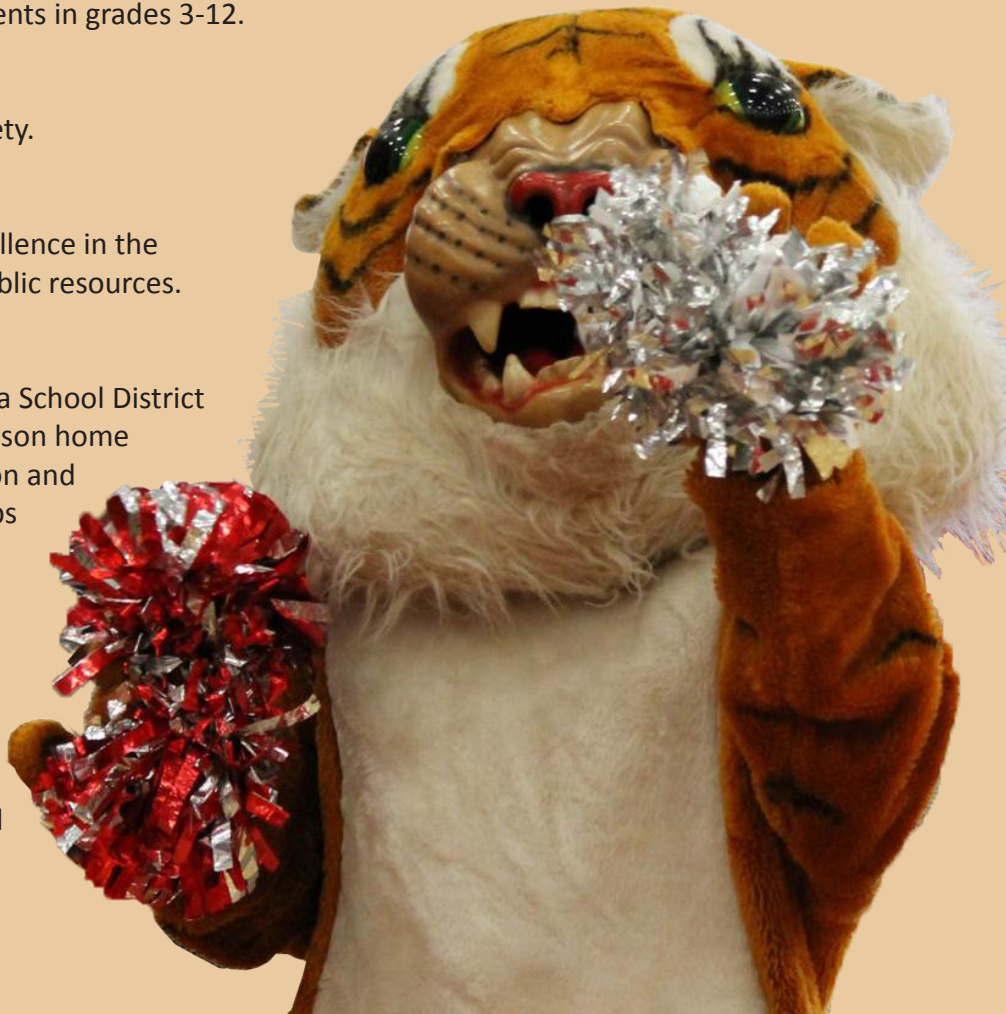
Demonstrate excellence in the stewardship of public resources.



Elevate Moon Area School District to the primary reason home buyers select Moon and Crescent townships over other communities.



Engage the community in the success of Moon Area School District.





There is but one Moon

Curt Baker
Superintendent of Schools

January 2015

There is but one Moon.

What does this mean?

It means that faculty, staff, administrators, school board members, parents, students, and the community must all be unified and pulling in the same direction.

It means that we are one district, not seven schools. And it means that, as a community, we are pursuing one wonderfully outlandish objective, not multiple agendas.

And what is that wonderfully outlandish objective?

It is to assure that every child achieves his or her full potential, and, in the process, move Moon from among the top 10 percent of Pennsylvania school

districts to among the top one percent. And then, once there, remain among the top one percent.

Said differently, we, as a district, intend to achieve and then sustain greatness.

It is important that I stress that our agenda for greatness is not really about test scores. Yes, we will be measured by our performance in high stakes testing. Yes, we will be measured by a newly created and spectacularly complicated formula called the School Performance Profile, or SPP.

The reality is that school districts that focus their activity on achieving high scores are almost never successful.

Exceptional schools are exceptional in every way.

It goes to the depth and breadth of our course offerings. It goes to the strength of our co- and extra-curricular activities, including athletics, drama, music and the arts. It goes to how well our students succeed after they leave us.

Consequently, our focus must be on providing an extraordinary educational experience that positions each student to fulfill his/her dreams, no matter how ambitious.

And how do we do this?

The following 10-point strategic plan – developed with input from more than 100 community members – lays the foundation for our journey to something truly remarkable.

Our journey toward greatness has already begun. Now is the time for our students, families, school board and community members to hop on board. We cannot do it alone or in isolation. We must come together as one district....for **there is but one Moon.**



*exceptional schools
are exceptional in
every way*



Strategic Intent: Top 1% of Pennsylvania schools

Moon's instructional strategy is built around three core principles – all of which are research-based and follow best educational practices:



Instructionally, move Moon Area School District from among the top 10 percent of school districts in Pennsylvania to among the top one percent. Once there, stay there.

- **Deliver a good, solid lesson in every classroom, every day.** This is a deceptively simple statement with huge implications. Education is about relentless constancy. Students in a classroom where, day in and day out, the teacher offers a good solid lesson will always outperform students in a classroom where the teacher's lessons are phenomenal one day and mediocre the next. Variability is the enemy of education. Therefore, it is imperative that classroom instruction, teacher observations, evaluations, professional development, and other instructional support networks must all be focused on achieving constancy.

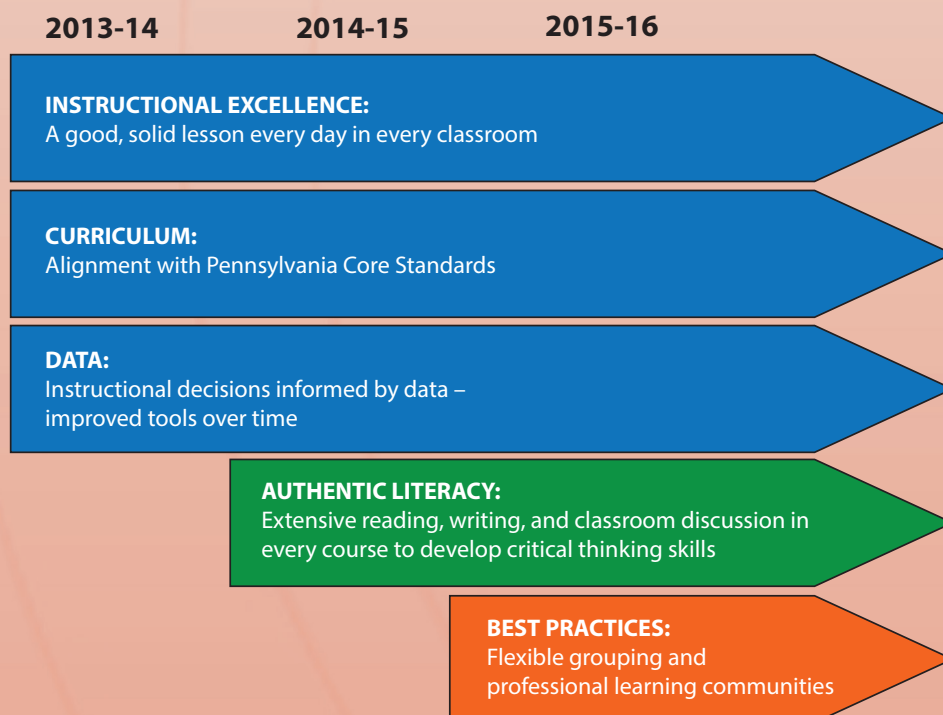
- **Follow a common, content-rich curriculum that is informed by data.** Curriculum provides a roadmap for teachers. It identifies where we are at the start of any given course, the destination where we need to go, and the path in between that enables teachers to teach the essential standards in sufficient intellectual depth so that students reach the desired destination.

Data are crucial to the development and ongoing evolution of curriculum. Data answer the critical question: "Where is the curriculum working and where is it not?" Data give life to curriculum. Good curriculum is fluid – adapting to

changes over time to emphasize strengths and correct weaknesses. Insights provided by data serve as the catalyst for this constant evolution.

- **Develop authentic literacy through purposeful reading, writing and classroom discussion in every discipline.** The objective of authentic literacy is to enable students to demonstrate mastery of content and develop critical thinking skills. Purposeful reading, writing and classroom discussion help create real understanding and develop the ability to apply that understanding in the real world.

Elements of Instructional Success



We have made significant strides in the use of student performance data to help guide instruction. We are extremely pleased with the positive impact that focusing only on what really matters has had – a solid lesson every day in every classroom, curriculum that is aligned with state standards and an unrelenting emphasis on authentic literacy as evidenced by extensive reading, writing and classroom discussion.

*Curt Baker
Superintendent of Schools*

Strategic Plan

On our way...

Four Moon schools among the top 10 in Allegheny County

Seven of eight Moon Area School District schools registered significant increases in student achievement, according to School Performance Profile data published Nov. 6, 2014, by the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

PDE released SPP results for each of Pennsylvania's 2,945 schools. Four Moon schools were among the top 10 in Allegheny County. In fact, three of the top five elementary schools in Allegheny County - Allard, Brooks and McCormick - are in Moon. Moon Area High School's SPP was third highest in the county.

"We have made significant strides in the use of student performance data to help guide instruction," Curt Baker, superintendent, said. "We are extremely pleased with the positive impact that focusing only on what really matters has had - a solid lesson every day in every classroom, curriculum that is aligned with state standards, and an unrelenting emphasis on authentic literacy, as evidenced by extensive reading, writing and classroom discussion."

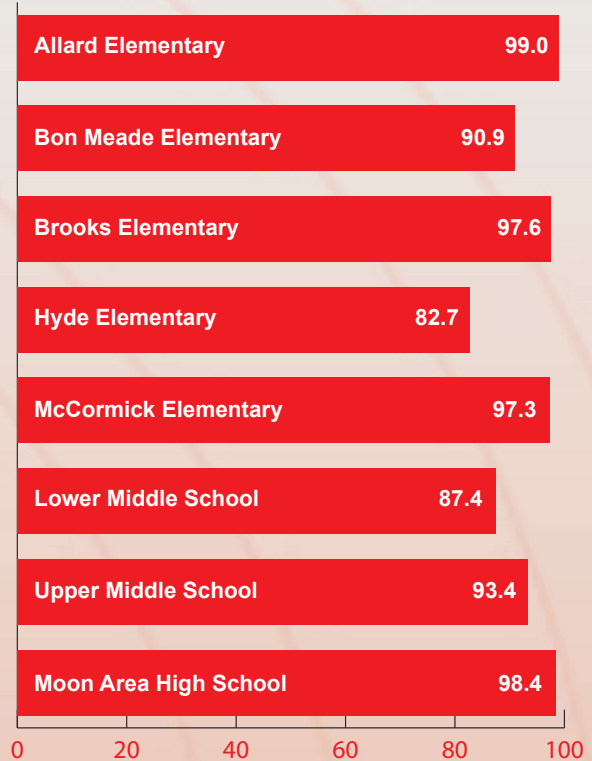
School Performance Profiles, which are available online at www.paschoolperformance.org, assign a score, based on a 100 point scale, to every public school in the commonwealth. Moon Area School District schools were assigned the following scores:

	2013	2014	Progress
Allard Elementary	96.1	99.0	+2.9
Bon Meade Elementary	89.4	90.0	+1.5
Brooks Elementary	90.2	97.6	+7.4
Hyde Elementary	72.7	82.7	+10.0
McCormick Elementary	93.5	97.3	+3.8
Lower Middle School	82.5	87.4	+4.9
Upper Middle School	93.6	93.4	-0.2
Moon Area High School	96.3	98.4	+2.1

Highlights of the School Performance Profile data include the following:

- Allard Elementary is the top performing elementary school in Allegheny County and has the fourth highest score in Pennsylvania.
- Brooks Elementary ranks fourth among elementary schools in Allegheny County and is tied for 10th in Pennsylvania.
- McCormick Elementary ranks fifth among elementary schools in Allegheny County and is tied for 12th in Pennsylvania.
- Moon Area High School is the third highest ranking high school in Allegheny and 13th in Pennsylvania.
- The year-over-year improvement in Hyde Elementary's SPP score was the 11th highest in Allegheny County.

2014 School Performance Profile Scores



Schools that received SPP scores of 70 or higher met or exceeded the achievement and growth standard for 2013-14. All Moon schools significantly exceeded this standard.

School Performance Profile scores are based upon achievement and growth on the PSSA and/or Keystone exams; graduation, promotion, and attendance rates; as well as participation and/or performance on the PSAT, SAT, ACT, NOCTI and Advanced Placement courses. Schools may earn up to seven extra points beyond the 100-point scoring system for students earning advanced scores on state, industry, and AP exams.

"Our strategic intent in Moon is to be among the top one percent of school districts in Pennsylvania," Caroline Johns, assistant superintendent for teaching and learning, said. "The improvement in our SPP scores over the last year affirms that our efforts are having a positive impact on student achievement. There is a ton of work yet to be done. It is exciting, however, to see the progress we've made."

Under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Pennsylvania public schools previously received Adequate Yearly Progress designations based upon their students' PSSA scores as well as attendance and graduation rates. The School Performance Profile, first launched in October 2013, replaced AYP.





Elementary capital improvement program enables instructional best practices

The Elementary Capital Improvement Program, approved in June 2014,

reconfigures the current

elementary schools from five buildings, serving kindergarten through grade 4, to four buildings – two (Brooks and Bon Meade) serving kindergarten through grade 2 and two (Allard and McCormick) serving grades 3 and 4. Hyde Elementary will close at the end of the current school year.

Currently, renovations, estimated at \$26.2 million, are underway on Allard and Brooks elementary schools, which are scheduled to be finished in time for the start of the 2015-16 school year.

The Elementary Capital Improvement Program will profoundly impact student instruction as well as professional development – creating new opportunities for all.

- Flexible grouping will be used to meet the academic needs of students in grades 3 and 4 – providing opportunities for

instruction, enrichment and/or remediation as necessary and appropriate for all students.

- Professional Learning Communities will be established within each elementary school that foster collaboration between and among grade level teachers.
- Professional development and constant feedback will be provided as teachers are afforded opportunities to observe and learn from one another.
- Additionally, Hyde Elementary School will be repurposed as “Fern Hollow Learning Center,” a multifaceted facility offering four critical services:

1. Quality (parent-pay) pre-kindergarten education for 3- and 4-year-old children. Fully aligned with Moon’s kindergarten curriculum, the program will be offered in partnership with Robert Morris University and the

Sewickley Valley YMCA.

2. Remediation and credit recovery for overage/under-credited high school and middle school students.
3. Enrichment opportunities for students interested in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). Called a “makerspace,” students will have a physical location to gather, share resources and knowledge, work on projects, network and build.
4. Professional development for teachers and other district employees in a setting that is appropriate for adult learners.

“The introduction of pre-K instruction is a huge step forward for the district,” Superintendent Curt Baker said.

“There’s a mountain of research that shows that students who are well-prepared for kindergarten tend to do well throughout their entire program of education.”



Brooks Elementary

Left: The “reading imagination space” within the renovated Brooks Elementary School will greatly enhance the educational program. The school will become a primary center - serving students in kindergarten through grade 2.

Allard Elementary

Beginning with the 2015-16 school year, the renovated Allard Elementary School will serve students in grades 3 and 4.



Strategic Plan

Implementing best practices: Flexible grouping and professional learning communities

What is flexible grouping?

Flexible grouping refers to the practice of bringing together students in various ways for the delivery of instruction. Group size and composition are adjusted to accommodate and reflect student progress and instructional objectives.

In Moon, we are – to some extent – already using flexible grouping strategies. For example, moving from “whole class” to “small group” instruction is a form of flexible grouping.

Why is flexible grouping important?

Elementary classrooms in Moon are currently assigned on a heterogeneous basis. For each grade level, children are assigned to different classrooms with the goal of creating a relatively even distribution of students of different abilities as well as different educational and emotional needs.

As a result, in each content area (e.g., math, reading, etc.), the teacher must differentiate her/his instruction to address the needs of students with a wide range of proficiencies. In fact, if the heterogeneous classroom assignments have been skillfully done in each subject area, the teacher is likely to encounter:

- Students who have already mastered all the material being taught in a given unit and need enrichment.
- Students who are right on track and will master the material being taught in the unit with regular instruction.
- Students who will struggle with the material being taught in the unit and will require extra assistance to achieve mastery.

No matter how good the teacher, the result is an outcome that favors the needs of the middle and not the ends. On one end, students find themselves inadequately challenged. On the other end, students may find themselves falling further behind because they cannot deal with the material being presented. As researcher Michael P. Ford describes it, “The difficulty of teaching a diverse group of students the same material often meant that some students – many times those who needed help the most – were not engaged.”

What will Moon be doing that is different?

If you were to lift the roof off an elementary school and peer down inside, it would resemble in many ways an egg carton. Each classroom is cordoned off from the others, creating a series of islands of learning. **Starting in the 2015-16 school year, Moon will utilize cross-classroom grouping, where appropriate. The goal is to bring together students with similar levels of mastery in a given content area so that each child is fully challenged.**

In those subjects where flexible grouping is used, a pre-test will be used to demonstrate mastery levels at the start of each unit. A unit generally runs six to eight weeks in duration. Groupings



will be determined by the pre-tests. Once the unit is complete, the grouping is dissolved, a pre-test for the next unit is administered, and new groupings are created. This process can be thought of as regular recalibration for each student in each subject area where flexible grouping is used.

How will Moon determine when to use flexible grouping?

Not all subject areas will use flexible grouping. Decisions will be age and content appropriate. For example, our approach will be different in first grade than in fourth. Teachers and administrators will work together to develop the approach that best meets the needs of students. The process will be informed by data and will assure alignment with Pennsylvania Core Standards.

Are “flexible grouping” and “tracking” the same thing?

No. Tracking is a rigid educational system that assigns students to a curricular path based on a forecasted graduation outcome – for example: college prep, general or vocational. Flexible grouping assembles students in a wide variety of ways to maximize each student’s achievement.

What is a professional learning community?

“It is a group of teachers who meet regularly as a team to identify essential and valued student learning, develop common formative assessments, analyze current levels of achievement, set achievement goals, share strategies, and then create lessons to improve upon those levels.

“Professional Learning Communities require the school staff to focus on learning rather than just teaching, work collaboratively on matters related to learning, and hold itself accountable for the kind of results that fuel continual improvement.”

Excerpted from “Schools as Learning Communities,” 2004, by Richard DuFour.





Measures of Success

The district will have met its Strategic Intent if, within four years, Moon Area School District is among the top one percent of Pennsylvania school districts in either or both of the two measures:

- School Performance Profile
- Student Achievement



Regularly measure and report progress toward our goal of reaching and remaining among the top one percent of Pennsylvania school districts.

Measure 1: School Performance Profile (SPP)	Measure 2: Student Achievement
What does it measure? SPP is a complicated measure used by the commonwealth to provide “a comprehensive overview of student academic performance in every Pennsylvania school building.” It takes into account far more than high stakes test results. For example, 40% of the score is based on “growth” versus the prior year of testing.	What does it measure? Measure is based entirely on student performance on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) exam, and Keystone Exams. (Note: School Digger data will be Moon’s primary source for comparative data reporting. The district will also monitor and report rankings published by the Pittsburgh Business Times.)
What goes into the calculation? Indicators of Academic Achievement (40%) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Percent proficient or advanced on PSSA tests and Keystone exams• Percent proficient or advanced on PSSA grade 3 reading• SAT/ACT College Ready Benchmark Achievement Gap Indicators (10%) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• All students• Historically under-performing Indicators of Academic Growth (40%) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• PVAAS growth index Other indicators (10%) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Graduation rate, promotion rate, attendance rate, AP, PSAT/PLAN participation Extra Credit for Advanced Achievement (7%)	What goes into the calculation? School Digger: School rankings are based on the most recently reported test scores. Its ranking system for most states is as follows: take all the schools that have test scores for math and English. Take the average math score across all the grades, and the average English score across all the grades, and add them together to make a combined score. That combined score is then sorted. The highest combined score is ranked #1, the second highest #2, and so on. Pittsburgh Business Times: Rankings are based on students’ scores on the PSSA exam, and the Keystone Exam. Students in grades 3 through 8 are ranked using three years of PSSA scores. Students in grade 11 are ranked based both on PSSA scores and Keystone Exam scores. Though we look at three years of scores, the current year is given the most weight.
Are district-level results published? The Pennsylvania Department of Education has indicated that it will not publish district-level SPP scores. Instead, it will only produce building-level numbers. As a result, Moon will need to produce its own estimate of statewide district-level results.	Are district-level results published? Yes. The Pittsburgh Business Times publishes its data in April (approximately one year after testing). School Digger publishes its data in December.

Note: 2014-15 is a recalibration year for PSSA scores as Pennsylvania students in grades 3 through 8 will be tested on the Pennsylvania Core Standards for the first time. Based on data from other states that have already transitioned to the Common Core, scores across Pennsylvania are likely to decline. Moon’s objective in this transitional year is to maintain or improve its relative positioning with other high performing school districts.

Strategic Plan

The Balanced Scorecard: A Strategic Measurement System

The Balanced Scorecard concept was introduced in a 1992 Harvard Business Review article written by Robert S. Kaplan, a Harvard Business School professor, and David P. Norton, a principal with the consulting firm Nolan, Norton & Company.

The idea was to give senior business managers and boards of directors a “balanced” look at their organization, taking into account the following four questions:

- How do customers see us? (customer perspective)
- What must we excel at? (internal perspective)
- Can we continue to improve and create value? (innovation and learning perspective)
- How do we look to shareholders? (financial perspective)

Kaplan and Norton concluded the following:

Traditional performance measurement systems specify the particular actions they want employees to take and then measure to see whether the employees have in fact taken those actions. In that way, the systems try to control behavior.

The Balanced Scorecard puts strategy and vision, not control, at the center. The measures are designed to pull people toward the overall vision. The Balanced Scorecard helps managers understand, at least implicitly, many inter-relationships ... and ultimately leads to improved decision making and problem solving.

After many years of successful implementation in the private sector, there is growing interest in adapting and applying the Balanced Scorecard methodology to public education.

The Moon Area School District Balanced Scorecard



Pursuant to the request of the school board, the district's administration is developing a Balanced Scorecard for Moon, built around five content areas:

- Academic Achievement
- Effective Teaching & Learning
- Community Engagement
- Stewardship of Public Resources
- Achieving our Strategic Intent

Central to the success of any Balanced Scorecard is the avoidance of “information overload.” Like the dashboard on a car, only a few critical, “timeless” measures can be used. There cannot be a proliferation of new measures whenever a worthwhile new suggestion is advanced.

The initial Moon Area Balanced Scorecard, which will be fully aligned with the district's strategic plan, will be introduced in Fall 2015 and will contain data for both the 2013-14 and 2014-15 school years.





The Finest Teaching Staff

When all is said and done, the success or failure of a public school system comes down to the quality, creativity, skill and commitment of its employees.

It therefore follows that if Moon is going to lift its performance to the top one percent of Pennsylvania school districts, then it must attract, develop, and retain exceptional employees.



Attract and retain the finest teaching staff in Pennsylvania.



The Case Study of Southwest Airlines: A model for Moon Area

"Our vision is to become the world's most loved, most flown, and most profitable airline."

Southwest Airlines did not become one of America's most admired companies and a benchmark for customer service by resting on its laurels. Southwest refined its vision and purpose despite posting 40 consecutive years of profitability.

This philosophy—never being satisfied with the status quo—traces its origin to Southwest founder Herb Kelleher. He said the core of the company's success is the most difficult thing for a competitor to imitate.

"They can buy all the physical things. The things you can't buy are dedication, devotion, loyalty—the feeling that you are participating in a crusade," Kelleher said.

- Excerpted from Carmine Gallo. "Southwest Airlines Motivates Its Employees With A Purpose Bigger Than A Paycheck." *Forbes*, January 21, 2014.

Strategic Plan Goals:

ATTRACT: Using a portfolio approach, develop multiple channels to create a deep pool of new and experienced candidates for all positions, so that the district can be highly selective in the individuals it chooses to hire. Examples include:

- Pittsburgh Education Recruiting Consortium (PERC), which is an annual recruiting event that attracts nearly all graduating education majors from more than 40 western Pennsylvania colleges and universities.
- Substitutes – especially long-term substitutes – who exhibit excellence in the classroom.
- Database targeting, through the use of PA Educator, which allows searches to be conducted by pulling a pool of prospective candidates who meet specific criteria.
- Self-hosted employment events like the recruiting fair hosted by

Moon in December 2014, at which more than 200 applicants were interviewed.

DEVELOP: Become acknowledged leaders in the observation, evaluation, and professional development of teachers and other education professionals.

RETAIN: Build a justified reputation for Moon as a "great place to work." The Moon Education Association (MEA) contract expires on June 30, 2015. The district goal is to either (a) forge an agreement by the end of the fiscal year with the MEA that sets the stage for a true partnership to emerge between the administration and the bargaining unit or (b) failing such agreement, continue to negotiate in good faith with the MEA until acceptable terms are reached. The district will not enter into an agreement that fails to set the stage for a lasting labor-management partnership in support of the district's strategic intent.

Excellence in teaching recognized



Moon Area School District promotes participation in programs to build skill, knowledge and reflection among our teaching staff—including the attainment of National Board Certification, presenting at national and statewide conferences and publication in professional journals.

We congratulate **Julie Briggs**, high school math teacher, who is among the 64 teachers in Pennsylvania and 4,158 in the nation to earn National Board Certification in 2014.

"National Board Certification is the gold standard for the teaching profession that recognizes teachers who have demonstrated the highest standards of teaching," Caroline Johns, assistant superintendent for teacher and learning, said.

Mrs. Briggs joins **Beth Lynn Carter**, third grade teacher at Brooks Elementary, as Moon Area School District's two National Board Certified Teachers.



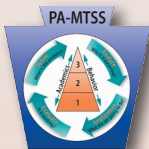
Meet the needs of special education students efficiently and effectively.

Description

Objective

Identification

Though Moon has historically used Child Study as its assessment approach, the district supports Pennsylvania's transition from Response to Instruction & Intervention (RtII) to a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (PA-MTSS).



PA-MTSS / RtII is a multi-step approach that provides early academic and behavioral supports to struggling students rather than waiting for a child to fail before offering help. ALL students have the opportunity to get needed help in general education classes, potentially reducing the number of students referred for special education services.

Improve the process of identifying and evaluating students potentially in need of special education, 504, and/or other educational services.

Ensure that children who should have access to special education services actually gain access to those services. Also, ensure that children who do not qualify for services do not receive services.

Case Management

The purpose of case management is to ensure that Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are appropriately written and that these plans are being fully implemented. IEPs are developed following a process that includes the use of assessment data, curriculum-based measurements, school-wide behavior programs, and input from all IEP team members.

IEP Team members include, but are not limited to, the case manager, regular education teacher(s), building administrator(s), related service personnel, outside agencies invited to attend, and parent(s). The case manager is also responsible for monitoring the plan and ensuring program compliance.

Assure that IEPs and 504 Plans include all appropriate services or accommodations to students. Similarly, ensure that unneeded services are excluded.

Develop case management protocols that promote greater consistency throughout the district while ensuring that the educational needs of students are being met.

Service Delivery

After the IEP is written, the IEP Team determines the manner in which the IEP is to be delivered.

The school district must ensure that the services provided are consistent with least restrictive environment requirements; that required timelines are being observed; that direct services, accommodations, modifications and other services indicated on the plan are being implemented in all school settings; and that the student is benefitting from the services provided.

Verify that services or accommodations set forth in IEPs or 504 Plans are being provided with quality and in a fiscally responsible manner.

Ensure that appropriate delivery systems are used to provide services; for example, is it better for a service to be MASD-delivered or outsourced to a third party vendor?



Left: The life skills classroom at Moon Area Middle School was designed to meet the learning needs of some special education students.





Guidance, Counseling & Gifted Education

We're in the graduate business.

On average, 300 students graduate from Moon Area High School each spring. Assuring that each is appropriately prepared to pursue his/her post-high school aspirations is a major objective of Moon Area School District.

"Earlier this year, I had an epiphany. In a conversation, someone indicated that we are in the business of education. For some reason, I realized at that moment that, no, we're not in the education business. Education is our methodology, our process," Superintendent Curt Baker said. "The truth is...we're in the graduate business."

The graduate business.

Moon Area School District's mission is to produce high school graduates. And its "customers" are colleges and universities, businesses and the military.

"We are not, however, in a commodity business," Mr. Baker said. "Rather, we are an artisan shop – each student is 'one of a kind' – so our approach to marketing our students requires thoughtful, individualized attention."

An artisan shop.

Artisan shops employ skilled craftsmen who use the highest quality ingredients to create handmade, one of a kind, distinctive products.



Become a recognized leader in guidance, school counseling, and gifted education by providing the tools and resources needed to achieve excellence.

"I prefer to look at our graduates from this perspective because it highlights the full scope of our obligation to each student. It is too limiting to think of our work as ending with the award of a diploma," Mr. Baker said. "Instead, we must also focus on the perception of our students after they have crossed the stage by those who will receive them." For Superintendent Baker, there are two guiding questions – the answer to both should be yes:

- **Have we developed our students in a way that enables them to pursue their dreams and aspirations?**
- **Are we a leader in skillfully marketing our students to colleges and universities, businesses, and the military?**

Strategies moving forward.

In the summer of 2014, Moon Area School District took two initial steps to improve its guidance services for students, creating a new director-level position and the implementation of an online tool (Naviance) for students and families. Neil English was hired in August of 2014 as Moon's first director of guidance, school counseling and gifted education.

"The creation of a director-level position indicates that this is an area of great importance to the organization," Mr. Baker said. "Neil brings a fresh perspective to guidance, counseling, and gifted education."

Throughout the fall of 2014, Mr. English visited many of the top performing schools across Pennsylvania, including neighboring school districts, to collect data relative to school counseling and guidance services.

"This state-wide study was conducted to gain insight on highly effective programs to see how we compare. Preliminary results show that we have some staffing needs and room to grow," Mr. English said. "We hope to focus on more comprehensive school counseling services in order to move from a reactionary model to a more proactive and student-centered approach."

Strategic Plan Goals:

Develop, implement and sustain a coordinated effort – focused primarily on secondary students – that:

- Builds a genuine understanding of each student's aspirations.
- Tailors course selection to align with the student's aspirations (while keeping the student on track for on-time graduation).
- Creates early intervention triggers if the student begins to veer off course.
- Is sufficiently flexible to accommodate changes in a student's aspirations over time.
- Measures the success of Moon Area students in meeting their aspirations.



Strategic Plan



The Naviance Story

In the fall of 2014, the district implemented Naviance, a web-based, comprehensive college and career readiness solution for middle and high school students that helps connect academic achievement and personal interests to post-secondary goals.

Naviance allows students to create a plan for their futures by helping them discover their individual strengths and learning styles – and explore career options based on those results.

Students are able to search for college programs based on their interests, determine which courses they need to take to reach their goals, and identify areas for improvement.

Once students are ready, Naviance makes it easy for them to apply to colleges, search for scholarships, and track their admission status. It even allows families to track their students' progress and communicate with school counselors.

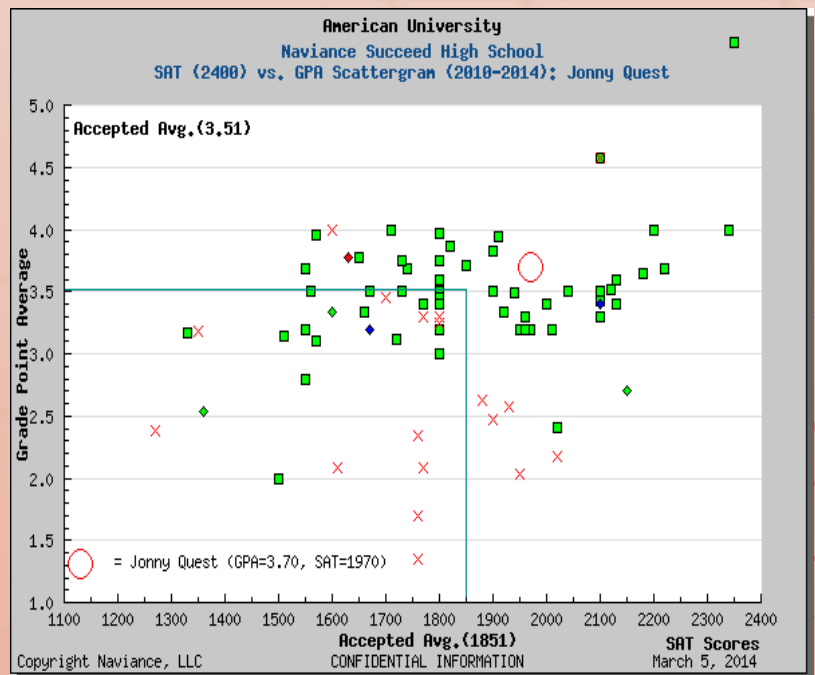
For counselors, Naviance offers quick access to student data and goals, as well as the automation of routine tasks such as email communication, student surveys, and submission of college admission materials - including transcripts.

"Without tools such as Naviance, we have turned guidance into a clerical function, since the handling of tasks that could be mechanized are all done manually," Neil English, director of guidance, school counseling and gifted education, said. "With the implementation of the Naviance system, our hope is to free counselors to perform higher level tasks that truly benefit our students."

Importantly, the district can track outcomes for all students to see how many get into college, what colleges they attend, and whether or not they graduate.

Naviance is the world's most widely adopted college and career readiness platform:

- 35 percent of all high school seniors in the United States have a Naviance account
- More than 7,500 schools use Naviance
- In 2013-14, more than 21 million documents were sent to colleges via Naviance



As the example above illustrates, students and counselors can see the admissions success of previous Moon students (including their GPA and SAT scores) at most colleges around the country.





Information Technology



Implement a technology strategy that focuses on putting technology in the hands of students in grades 3-12.

Administrative	Infrastructure	Instructional
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Transition to integrated software products – or products that can easily be linked in key fields.Wherever possible, move to a hosted environment.Implement AptaFund – a fully integrated accounting, purchasing, payroll, and HRIS system; then focus on website and student information system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Improve network reliability.Assure connectivity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Transition to a “technology in the hands of the student” emphasis for grades 3-12.Immediate transition to 1:1 computing at MAHS.Cascade machines to elementary and middle schools as they are freed.Goal: 1:1 computing expanded to MAMS and 1:2 computing in grades 3-4.Define and address K - grade 2 teacher technology needs.

At many of the nation's great universities, teachers teach - and technology is in the hands of students.



University of Virginia



University of Southern California



Princeton University

Moon launches 1:1 laptop initiative at high school



At the start of the 2014-15 school year, Moon Area School District launched a One-to-One Laptop Initiative at the high school. Every student, grades 9-12, received a Dell laptop computer, which will be used until graduation from high school. All laptops are loaded with Windows 8.1 and outfitted with Microsoft Office 365.

The One-to-One Laptop Initiative is the first step of the district's plan to shift from an approach in which most instructional technology is placed in the hands of teachers to one in which most technology is in the hands of students, starting in third grade.

“Having access to technology improves student achievement, particularly in the areas of writing, problem solving and research skills,” Superintendent Curt Baker said. “Studies show that it improves college and workplace readiness.”

Next year, the high school laptops will start benefitting the district's elementary schools. As high school seniors graduate, their laptops will be refurbished, and then cascaded to lower grades, where there is an identified need for updated technology.

Safety & Discipline

School Safety & Security

School safety and security are top priorities of Moon Area School District.

In January of 2014, a comprehensive review of the district's safety and security readiness was completed. The review team was led by Ken Trump, one of the nation's leading school safety experts, with 30 years of front-line security experience working with school and safety officials from all 50 states and Canada.

Mr. Trump is president of National School Safety and Security Services, a firm that specializes in helping superintendents, school boards, principals and educators strengthen school safety, security, emergency preparedness, and crisis communication planning.

The report that was issued by Mr. Trump and his team found that Moon Area schools are doing an excellent job providing a safe school environment for all students. The district is fortunate to have strong positive relationships with the Moon and Crescent police and fire departments – partnerships that are vitally important to overall school safety.

The report did, however, identify: (a) a number of safety improvements that could be made to the district's buildings, (b) certain processes that should be reviewed for conformity with best practices, and (c) a need for further work on the district's crisis communications plan. Many of the Trump team's suggestions have already been implemented. Others will be implemented as part of the elementary capital improvement program.



Ensure school safety.

School Safety & Security Goals:

- Further enhance partnerships with first responders.
- If ongoing funding is assured, partner with Moon Township Police to bring a school resource officer to Moon High School and, perhaps, a second SRO to Moon Area Middle School.
- Strengthen the district's crisis communication plan.
- Practice emergency response through facilitated tabletop exercises and other best practice preparedness training techniques.
- Review district progress and continued alignment with best practices every three years.

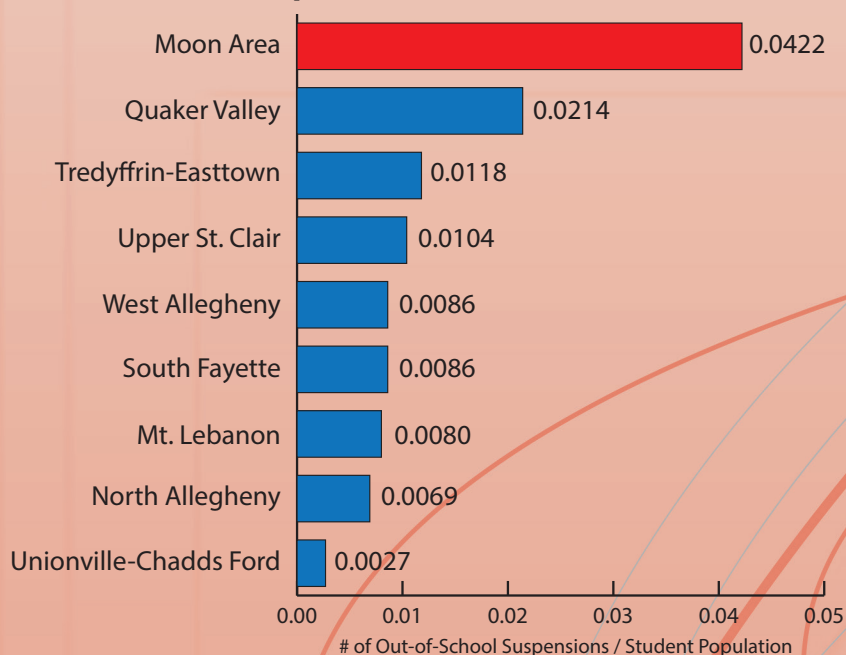
Student Discipline

A review of recent student discipline data indicates the need for a review of how we address inappropriate behavior by our students.

The chart below shows the out-of-school suspension rate, by district, adjusted to a per student basis to make the numbers comparable.

The data indicate, for example, that students in Moon are suspended 5.3 times more frequently than students in Mt. Lebanon. Intuitively, we do not believe that behavior in our buildings is significantly different than in any of the buildings in the districts shown in the chart.

Out-of-School Suspension Rates



This means that Moon may be suspending students for behaviors that might not result in an out-of-school suspension in other districts.

As part of this strategic plan, Moon Area School District will conduct a full review of its approach to assigning consequences for inappropriate student behavior. The purpose of this work is to assure that we maximize student days in the classroom while at the same time maintaining an orderly and safe school environment.





Fiscal Stewardship & Operational Excellence



Demonstrate excellence
in the stewardship of
public resources.

“Here’s the way it is supposed to work,” says Moon’s new chief operating officer/chief financial officer, Margaret Lindsey. “The district’s support service organizations provide a solid business foundation in a way that complements and enhances the district’s core purpose, which is teaching and learning. You wouldn’t display a bouquet of fresh flowers in a paper bag, would you? Of course not. Instead, you use a vase, the size and quality of which is in keeping with the arrangement. Done right, the two work perfectly together to produce something of beauty.”

Support services cover a broad scope of activity ranging from all aspects of fiscal management (e.g., accounting, finance, purchasing, payroll) to facilities management (which includes the maintenance and custodial care of the district’s seven buildings) to business operations (which includes food services, student transportation, and information technology), to human resources management.

Moon Area School District is the ninth largest employer in Moon and Crescent townships; is one of the largest property management companies; is among the largest restaurant chains, serving 1,512 meals each day; and is the largest transportation company, carrying 3,989 passengers each day.

Strategic Goals for Fiscal Management

1. Ensure full fiscal transparency

- Put strong fiscal controls in place, including position control.
- Assure that reporting provides genuine insight into the fiscal condition of the district.
- Constantly review the organization, both fiscally and operationally, for improvement opportunities.

2. Ensure there are sufficient resources to sustain planned programs

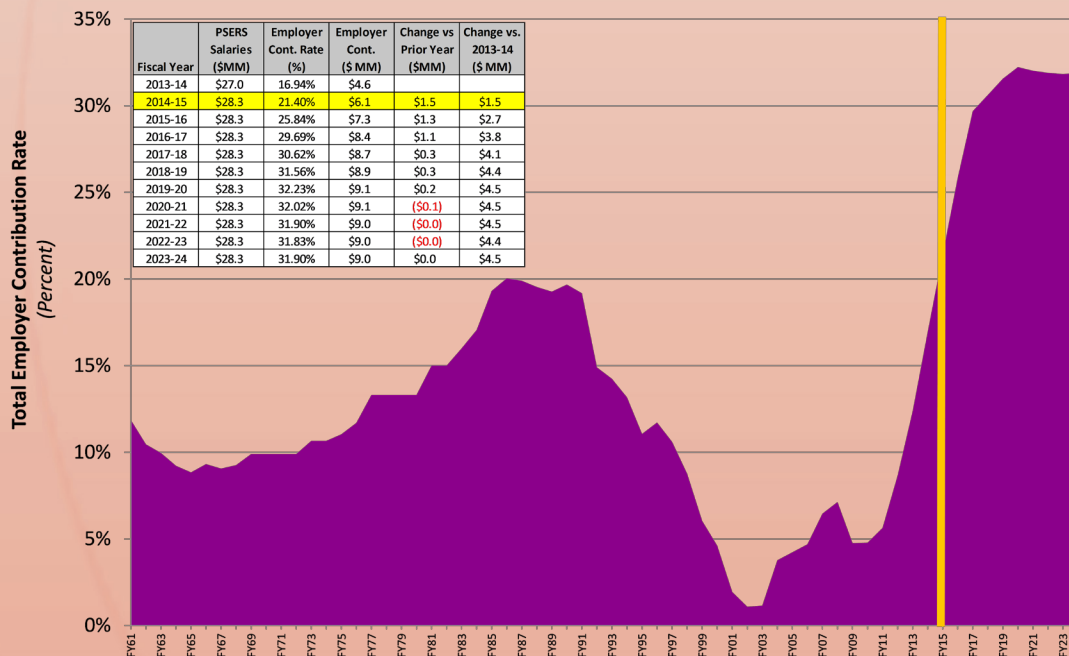
- Address fiscal challenges – like PSERS – head on.
- Don’t start a new program unless its funding source is assured over time.
- Utilize effective cost containment strategies.
- Identify and pursue a variety of funding sources.

3. Operate the district’s business operations prudently and effectively

The PSERS Issue...

Perhaps the most significant challenge facing public schools from a financial perspective involves the Public School Employee Retirement System (PSERS), which is managed by the commonwealth and is seriously under-funded. The chart to the right shows the “employer contribution rate” for employees who are enrolled in the PSERS program (which is essentially all full-time employees).

In 2014-15, for example, for every \$100 Moon pays to its employees in salaries, it will pay another \$21.40 (21.4%) into



PSERS. Because the retirement system is underfunded, that rate is expected to climb to at least 32% in the next five

years. Moon is bound by law to continue to participate in PSERS and to pay the rates established by the state legislature.

Strategic Plan

Goal: “We moved here for the schools”



Elevate Moon Area School District to the primary reason home buyers select Moon and Crescent townships over other communities.

Given the strong link between school district quality and housing prices, it is vital that Moon Area School District work closely with local realtors to get the message out about the district's progress in achieving its objectives.

Moving.com advises home buyers that: “Your first conversation about schools should be with your real estate agent, who can provide information on local neighborhoods and the choice of schools your children might attend, whether public or private.”

If this is so, it is incumbent on the district to provide current information about the district to local realtors and to be certain that these realtors are able to articulate Moon Area School District's “story.” The district must create compelling

publications in both print and electronic form that support the strategic intent and effectively communicate Moon's value.

In addition, the district must open its doors to prospective home buyers, greet them warmly when they stop in (even unexpectedly), and make certain that the prospective buyer's experience in Moon Area schools is highly favorable.

In an environment such as ours, where school district / realtor relations are poorly developed, Moon Area School District will attempt to foster new relationships by hosting quarterly realtor forums commencing in early March of 2015. During the forum, realtors will learn about the academic, athletic, music, art, leadership and other co-curricular activities available to

Moon Area students. Realtors will also have an opportunity to ask questions of Moon's superintendent, principals and other administrators and will receive an informational packet about the district.

These forums will not be a one-way affair. The school district will be soliciting feedback from realtors – a sharing of ideas regarding steps the Moon Area School District can take to make itself more marketable to prospective home buyers.

Over time, the goal is for this give and take to result in strong relationships between local realtors and the schools, to the general benefit of all Moon and Crescent township residents.

“We find that the price premium parents must pay to buy a house in an area associated with a better school increases as school quality increases. ... In the St. Louis metropolitan area, houses associated with a school ranked at one standard deviation below the mean are essentially priced on physical characteristics only. In contrast, houses associated with higher-quality schools command a much higher price premium.”

Abbigail J. Chiodo, Rubén Hernández-Murillo, and Michael T. Owyang. “Nonlinear Effects of School Quality on House Prices.” Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis Review. May/June 2010.

Consumers are willing to sacrifice certain things to live in the right school district. Some of Realtor.com's survey results were surprising: One out of five buyers would give up a bedroom or a garage for a better school. One out of three would buy a smaller home. A full 51 percent would give up shopping for schools.

Buyers are also willing to put their money where their mouths are. One out of five home buyers said they would pay six to 10 percent above their budget for the right school. One out of 10 would double that to 20 percent.

Sam Debord. “The Right School District: How Much Do Schools Affect Real Estate Prices?” Realtor.com. August 2013.





Community Engagement

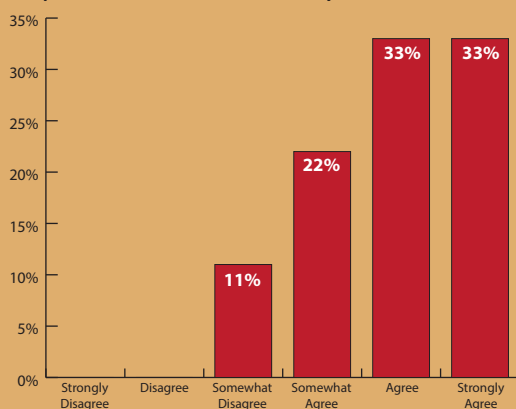
In the process of gathering input for this strategic plan, we conducted an informal, unscientific survey of community perceptions. Approximately 100 Moon residents were asked: “What is your level of agreement with each of the following statements?”



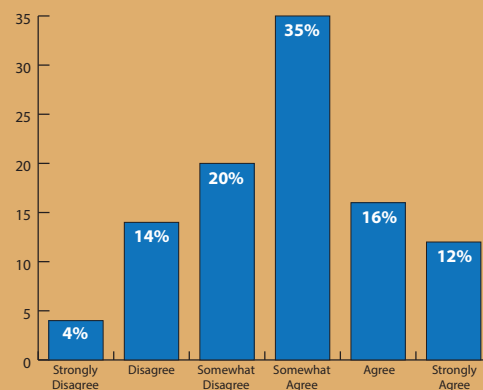
Engage the community in the success of Moon Area School District.

The responses to two of the questions were of particular concern:

Moon Area School District is capable of rising to the top 1% of school districts in Pennsylvania



Moon Area SD has the community support it needs to achieve its goal of rising to the top 1% of school districts in Pa.



The data suggest widespread agreement that our students are capable of lifting Moon’s performance to the top one percent of school districts in Pennsylvania. There is considerable skepticism, however, about the district’s ability to muster the public support needed to achieve this outcome.

The Moon Area School District must effectively engage the community if this Strategic Plan is to be successful. Community members who participated in a series of focus group sessions shared a wide range of perceptions that fall into three neat bundles:

- Moon Area School District has failed to develop a brand for itself and, as a result, is unable to promote itself in a consistent or effective manner.
- Customer service is lacking, creating an impression that the district is unfriendly, unwelcoming, and uninterested in engaging the community.
- The district has made no visible efforts to involve parents, empty-nesters, businesses, realtors, faith-based organizations, and non-profits – **and so it stands alone.**

Brand development, public relations and customer service are all within the district’s control. And while shortcomings cannot be corrected with the flip of a switch, community members should begin to notice improvements in these areas in the very near future. More challenging is the outreach to long-neglected segments of our community. To this end, the following are key goals:

- **Visible Leadership.** As the chief executive of the school system, it is crucial that the superintendent build bridges that do not currently exist. The superintendent will be a highly visible and accessible ambassador for the school system across our community. That said, it is important that every Moon Area employee – teachers, principals, custodians, administrative staff, food service workers, or other professionals – realize that they too are district ambassadors.
- **Partnering.** The school district must create and/or expand partnerships with parents, Robert Morris University, local businesses and civic organizations, township leaders, first responders, churches, alumni, and the like.

- **Engaging the community.** Simply put, we need to provide reasons for community members to feel a part of the school system. This is more than volunteering opportunities. Our schools need to offer fun, neat stuff that brings people out.
- **Communicate.** As Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw said: “The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.” Most schools are good – but not necessarily great – at getting messages delivered to students and their families. However, like most communities, more than 70 percent of Moon and Crescent township residents are empty nesters who live beyond most current district communication channels. Moon Area School District must find ways to communicate with ALL of its constituents in an appropriate and meaningful fashion.

“We are hopeful that the wide distribution of this strategic plan constitutes a good start,” Superintendent Curt Baker said. “It is, however, only a start, and the onus is on us to continue to build and improve communication channels over time.”

Opportunities for community engagement:

Connecting with community members – especially those without school-age children – is a recognized challenge for Moon Area School District. In Pennsylvania, schools are locally funded. Meanwhile, more than 70 percent of the community does not have a child enrolled in Moon's schools. The district needs to make every effort to inform and engage its taxpayers.

"Moon Area School District offers a tremendous value in the quality of its educational and extracurricular programming, which has a direct correlation to maintaining and growing property values," Superintendent Curt Baker said. "Simply put, high quality schools and high quality communities go hand-in-hand."

For the school district to truly excel, it is essential that we all join together to make the strategic intent of moving Moon Area School District to the top one percent in Pennsylvania a community priority. If you are a Moon or Crescent township resident or work here, you are encouraged to become more involved by attending or participating in any of the following opportunities:

Athletic Events: With more than 25 varsity and club sports, there are multiple opportunities to attend events throughout the fall, winter and spring sports seasons. Moon Area High School was named one of five 2013-14 PIAA Sportsmanship Award winners.



Music Events: Moon presents a wide variety of music and theater performances – all of which are available to the community. These include a fall play and spring musical, orchestral performances, and band competitions. You will be hard pressed to find a public school district with a deeper arts program than Moon anywhere in the country. In fact, Moon was honored as among the nation's Best Communities for Music Education by the NAMM Foundation – one of only seven districts in Allegheny County and 376 nationwide to earn this distinction in 2014.

Volunteer: The middle and high school host events throughout the year that present great opportunities for community members to become involved – especially our business leaders. Participating in a career fair, serving as a guest speaker and offering job shadowing and mentoring opportunities will greatly benefit Moon Area students.

Parent/Teacher Organizations: Each of the district's schools has an active parent organization that meets regularly to plan and

implement programs to support its respective school community.

Booster Organizations: Booster groups generally serve as the fundraising organization for a sport, music or other co-curricular offering. Moon's booster organizations play a vital role in providing opportunities or equipment that are beyond the scope of the district's budget.



Alumni: Graduates of Moon Area School District are invited and encouraged to become involved with the district through the formation of an alumni association. In addition, many of the high school's athletic and co-curricular organizations periodically host events for former athletes and participants. These are excellent opportunities to reconnect with old friends and classmates as well as to stay informed about the progress of programs that were important to you during your time at Moon Area High School.

Moon Area Excellence in Education Fund: Created to support programs and students of Moon Area School District, the Moon Area Excellence in Education Fund offers residents and alumni the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of students. Whether assisting with a special event, serving as an Education Fund board member, or making a tax-deductible contribution, your support and involvement will enhance the school district and, ultimately, Moon and Crescent townships.

Homecoming: In the fall of 2014, Moon Area School District hosted its first traditional homecoming event since the new high school opened with events for the entire community. Complete with a parade, pep rally, school tours, football game, marching band, bonfire and sock hop, the event attracted thousands of residents and alumni to the Moon campus. Homecoming will continue to be a hallmark event each fall.

Coffee with Curt: Moon Area School District Superintendent Curt Baker hosts monthly informal community sessions – Coffee with Curt. These are opportunities to talk with the superintendent about the district's programs, school board actions, curriculum, the Elementary Capital Improvement Program, strategic plan, and more.

For more information on how to get involved, contact Tina Vojtko, community relations & grants coordinator, at tvojtko@moonarea.net or call 412-264-9440 ext 1130.



The bottom line is that, if we are to be successful, there can be but one Moon.

We must come together, as a district and as a community. We must be nimble and willing to change –not for the sake of change but to move Moon Area School District forward toward its strategic intent. We must always focus on student success, never losing sight of the fact that exceptional schools are exceptional in every way. And in this manner, we will succeed.

- Curt Baker
Superintendent of Schools



Strategic Plan

Moon Area School District Board of Education

A. Michael Olszewski.....President
Denny Harbaugh, Jr.....Vice President
Gia R. Tatone.....Secretary
Laura J. Schisler.....Treasurer
Jeffrey C. Bussard.....Board Member
Michael A. Hauser.....Board Member
Scott E. LaRue.....Board Member
Jerry Testa.....Board Member
Samuel K. Tranter.....Board Member

District Administration

Curt Baker.....Superintendent of Schools
Caroline Johns.....Assistant Superintendent for Teaching & Learning
Margaret Lindsey.....Chief Operating Officer/Chief Financial Officer
William Addy.....Director of Human Resources
Michael Haslett.....Director of Special Education
Christopher Caton.....Director of K-12 Instruction and Curriculum
Neil English.....Director of Guidance, School Counseling & Gifted
Kimberly Prevost.....Director of Data & Analysis
Thomas Knight.....School Psychologist
Ricci A. Rich.....Athletic Director
Tina Vojtko.....School/Community Relations & Grants Coordinator

Building Administration

Moon Area High School

Barry Balaski, Principal
Lucas Furlow, Asst. Principal
Joseph Johnson, Asst. Principal

Moon Area Middle School

Melissa Heasley, Principal
Megan Kirchner, Asst. Principal
Jeffrey Jaworowski, Asst. Principal

J. A. Allard Elementary

Ashley Beeson, Principal

Bon Meade Elementary

Susan Kazmierczak, Principal

J.H.Brooks Elementary

Lynnette Conti Dinello, Principal

R.J. Hyde Elementary School

David Gallup, Principal

McCormick Elementary School

Julie Moore, Principal