

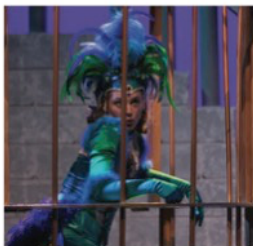
2021-2022



BETHLEHEM
AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

Vision and Strategy

For the Bethlehem Area School District



Bethlehem Area School District

Education Center
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MEMORANDUM

March 2021

TO: Board of School Directors
FROM: Dr. Joseph J. Roy, Superintendent of Schools
SUBJECT: Vision and Strategy 2021-2022

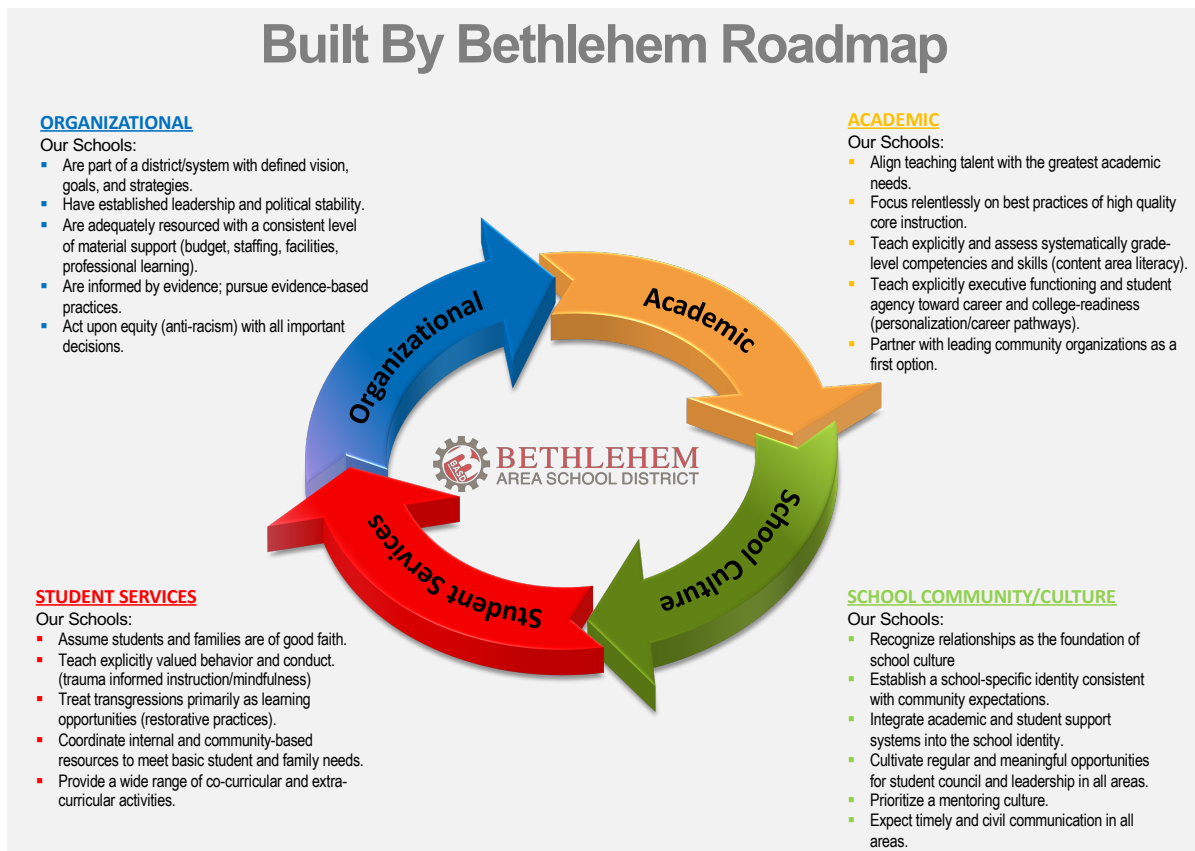
MISSION

The Bethlehem Area School District in partnership with the home and community is committed to providing a safe and supportive environment in which each student will attain the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to become a productive citizen and self-directed, lifelong learner in our technologically demanding and culturally diverse society.

PURPOSE

Eliminate race and family income as predictors of school success by guaranteeing equitable access to opportunities for personalized learning and growth.

The Bethlehem Area School District's recently updated "Built by Bethlehem Roadmap" identifies 4 components of successful school systems: Academic, Student Services, Organizational and School Culture. This new adaptation of our Roadmap recognizes the need for synergy between each of the four components. The Roadmap continues to inform the vision and strategic initiatives detailed in this document by describing a common language and program focus that guide improvements across our school system. Each component is defined by key criteria and descriptors as seen on the Roadmap graphic.



The educational and social/emotional consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on our students are significant. In the Student Services component, we will have to provide even greater resources for mental health services over the next several years. In the Academic component, we will need to devise additional academic support inside and outside of the school day and year while simultaneously strengthening core instruction. In the School Culture component, after 1.5 years of pandemic disrupted school years, we will need to rebuild and energize school traditions and events that have been on hold. Organizationally, we need to continue to invest in information technology, our facilities and, most importantly, our people.

In order to recover from the setbacks and challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, all of our Roadmap components must align with:

- Regaining momentum with Reading by Grade 3
- Building on the Secondary Level Literacy Initiative (currently piloted at Broughal MS)
- Extending our anti-racism and equity work
- Navigating pandemic created economic challenges to maintain our financial stability
- Building on what we learned through the pandemic to change and improve systems related to instruction, grading, and student scheduling
- Expanding access to school-based therapeutic mental health and trauma-informed services

The remaining pages of this booklet provide detailed descriptions of priorities and initiatives that span the 4 components of successful school systems. The department by department details inform the public and the Board about the important work of the district.

Equity and Anti-Racism

Guiding Purpose: to eliminate race and family income as predictors of school success by guaranteeing equitable access to opportunities to learn and grow

As the sixth largest school district in Pennsylvania, the Bethlehem Area School District has had a commitment to diversity and inclusion for its students and communities of color for some time. In the early 1980s, the district partnered with the Puerto Rican community to ensure that there would be a focus for this specific group and the Office of Minority Affairs was created. We've learned a lot since that time and what we have learned is that our commitment must go deeper. The work must include equity and antiracism.

During the 2015-16 school year, the district made its first bold statement to eliminate race and family income as predictors of school success by guaranteeing equitable access to opportunities to learn. Not enough. The 2019-2020 school year opened with a loud call for movement from being non-racist to antiracist. And then our school community, forced to be quarantined and isolated during a pandemic, witnessed the murders of men and women of color, racial unrest and the debilitating effects of the Covid virus on communities of color. This impacted the entire BASD family, but even more so our marginalized communities. And short of a year from the start of the pandemic, we witnessed an insurrection on the Capitol, which highlighted the racial divide of our country. It was clear that the disparities in our nation and in our communities are wide and systemic racism runs deep. We must do something. We must move from allyship to accomplices and co-conspirators in this antiracist work. We must promise to learn more and do more. A journey of inner growth to outward action. From head and heart to hands. Therefore,

Our district promises to sincerely and openly dive into the educational inequities and systemic racism that exists in all academic areas.

Our district promises to confront unconscious and conscious biases and all forms of racism and its intersections.

Our district promises to prioritize the voices of our marginalized youth and families and eliminate discriminatory practices that silences them.

Our district promises to be courageous in the work and lean into the discomfort that growth and change will cause.

Our district promises to use culturally responsive, trauma informed and equitable practices to do this work.

We will work together with our faculty, staff, administrators, and community partners to uplift our students and families. We will do the heavy lifting and collectively learn and grow together. The burden of change lies with us.

We're up to the challenge, to the necessary and intentional work that must be done for authentic change to occur.

We are #BuiltByBethlehem. We must.

Educational Programs

Strategic Initiatives: Educational Programs Budget, 2021-2022

Informing Budget Decisions: Educational Programs

There are numerous opportunities to recover, maintain, and extend successful educational programs in the BASD over the next five years that will help students achieve higher levels of performance. *Improved BASD student performance means stretching students to their potential and helping them achieve career and college readiness after leaving our school district.*

The BASD will place additional emphasis on effective instruction and the equitable distribution of educational resources to recover from the pandemic, as well as re-establish and extend the achievement of recent academic goals:

- Making students and teachers “whole” and **academically successful after the dislocations of the COVID-19 pandemic** since March 2020.
 - (1) Reintroduce/reorient students to the school/classroom setting with broad integration of school-readiness strategies, executive functioning skills, data-informed academic interventions, and social-emotional supports.
 - (2) Develop evidence-based Summer 2021 and afterschool programming in the 2021-2021 school year aligned to BASD academic recovery efforts.
 - (3) Make needed adjustments to the 2021-2022 academic program and/or its delivery to support both grade-level instruction and needed academic scaffolds and supports.
 - (4) Evaluate, refine, and implement blended learning options K-12 that showed promise/success during the pandemic.
 - (5) Continue and expand applying the equity lens to all academic programming decisions.
- The top academic priority of the BASD continues to be having **all students reading at grade level by the end of Grade 3 (RBG3)**. The elementary school program will place additional emphasis on district-supported programs and regional collective impact efforts that:
 - (1) Support and align Pre-K programming to RBG3 goals and strategies.
 - (2) Expand parent education offerings to align to RBG3.
 - (3) Meet the basic needs of BASD students and families that allow them to access needed educational opportunities.
 - (4) Provide sustained training and job-embedded coaching to all professionals dealing with BASD elementary students in the most current reading pedagogy and assessment.
 - (5) Implement with fidelity the *Wonders* reading series at the elementary level.
 - (6) Support the use of meaningful and timely data to vigorously monitor the progress of learners toward RBG3 goals.
 - (7) Enlist the support of community organizations in support of the BASD’s RBG3 goals.
- The BASD will commence a strategy to improve **K-2 students’ math skills and achievement** that resembles the evidence-based RBG3 approach, with 2021-2022 emphasizing the training of elementary principals in leading and supervising effective math instruction in BASD classrooms.
 - (1) The BASD will contract with *Math Solutions, Inc.* to assist in the training of principals in 2020-2021
 - (2) The BASD will establish valid and reliable K-2 Math benchmark data and responsive data use protocols to help improve instruction and student outcomes
 - (3) The BASD does not intend to pilot/adopt a new K-2 Math curriculum until Spring 2022.

- The BASD will re-establish and extend **Any Given Child Bethlehem** by integrating community-based arts programming into academic programming in each grade, K-6.
- The middle schools and high schools will commence a three-year literacy plan to **improve instruction in the 20 core courses spanning Grades 6-10**. Specifically,
 - (1) Establish a system of content area literacy assessment that employs beginning-of-year, middle-of-year, and end-of-year benchmarking using *Acadience*
 - (2) Provide secondary literacy leadership training to secondary administrators
 - (3) Contract with Keys to Literacy to provide training and coaching of core course teachers in Grades 6-8, emphasizing consistent comprehension routines
 - (4) Implement the *StudySync* curriculum in all ELA courses in Grades 6-10
- Transform assessment and **grading practices in BASD secondary schools to align to a standards-based performance** model. Specifically,
 - (1) Develop and implement a three-year BASD Assessment & Grading Plan that will guide the BASD through: (a) needed professional learning, (b) redesigning the report card, (c) establishing consistent standards for what a student must “know and be able to do” to show excellence and competence at grade level, (d) creating new and more equitable systems of incentives/recognitions for academic excellence that include changes to GPA, class rank, and academic distinctions, and (5) adjusting BASD data and communication systems to align to standards-based grading and reporting.
 - (2) Build understanding, consensus, and support among all BASD stakeholders for standards-based reforms.
- The high school **Career Pathways** program will continue its evolution in developing graduates that are career and college ready. That process includes supporting students in a ubiquitous technology environment who can:
 - (1) Identify areas of personal strength and interest
 - (2) Set personal goals and strategic learning plans
 - (3) Select and navigate college and career curricular paths in STEM, Arts & Humanities, Health & Human Services, Business, Finance & Law, Education, and High-Need Vocational-Technical Occupations
 - (4) Experience more rigorous, relevant, and consistent assessment of student performance that include service learning, blended learning, job shadowing, internship programs, mentoring programs, dual enrollment and credentialing in support of college and career goals.
 - (5) Expand dual enrollment programming.
 - (6) Learn in modern formats that include digital content, learning management systems, blended instructional formats, student portfolios, and modern presentation technologies.
- Continue emphasizing **student engagement and personal skills development** to produce committed students of personal character. The district will implement with fidelity:
 - (1) Leader in Me (K-5) in support of district goals and social-emotional learning
 - (2) Trauma-Informed Schools (K-12)
 - (3) Restorative Practices (6-12)
 - (4) No Place for Hate (K-12)

The BASD will pursue all educational initiatives in a manner that promotes **excellence through equity**.

The BASD will pursue **anti-racism** measures to eliminate the barriers that lead to race and family income becoming predictors of school success.

The BASD aims to **recover more students lost to/considering charter schools** by more publicly sharing district success, successful programs (such as BASD Cyber, blended options, co-curricular activities), and robust community partnerships with the broader community. We believe that all students can and should find their educational home in the BASD!

Educational Programs

Early Learning, Grants, and Development

Child Care

The Bethlehem Area School District has been offering affordable, quality child care to parents for over 30 years. The District currently has 12 OHS licensed sites at our elementary schools. The PA Office of Child Development and Early Learning has recognized many of the District's child care sites by awarding them Keystone STARS designations for high-quality child care.

During the 2020-21 school year, the child care office and school sites plan to increase collaborative efforts with the District's designated United Way Community Schools. This partnership will assist staff members in providing opportunities for children in BASD's child care to participate in various activities. The child care department will also emphasize collaboration within and between child care and other district programs.

The child care department will continue to participate in the Keystone STARS program. The District's goal is to increase participation in the Keystone STARS program by continuing to move up one level so that all eligible sites are a level three or four. The initiative has started the revisioning process. This distributes funds to sites with STAR 2, 3, 4 designation through an add-on to the Child Care Works subsidy reimbursement per child/daily rate in lieu of merit grant funds. The 2017-18 school year was the first wave of this impact on funding for PA's high-quality child care programs.

In 2020 ten of the twelve BASD child care sites have STAR 4 designation.

2020-2021

- Increase collaborative efforts with the district's Community Schools to provide opportunities for children in BASD's child care to participate in activities.
- Emphasize collaboration within and between child care and other district programs.
- Continue professional development efforts regarding Google Chromebooks used by children to support academics.
- In 2019-20 a fee increase was approved to offset rising PSERS contributions, health insurance costs, and additional contractual benefits. This fee increase was the first in four years. Appropriate fee increases will be necessary to support/maintain a self-sustaining program for the K-5 children and families in the district.
- Increase participation (2 remaining level STAR 2 sites) in the Keystone Stars program by continuing to move up so that all eligible sites are a level three or four.
- Evaluate the child care program's technology equipment and software through collaboration with the business office and IT department.
- Implement a collaborative partnership with the Bethlehem Health Bureau and Aramark Dining Services vendor to promote a Farm-to-Table health initiative.
- Expand the materials and opportunities available to children in center-based Maker Spaces.
- Evaluate demand for Child Care at Donegan and William Penn Elementary Schools

2021-2022

- Encourage all child care assistants to earn early childhood credits.
- Encourage all NIMD Child Care Center Supervisors to pursue continuing education credits toward a BA degree in early childhood education or a Director Credential. This may require the exploration of a change to the salary scale.
- Implement an electronic payment option for fee payments
- Implement use of a communication platform for Child Care families, such as "Class Dojo" or "Smart Care".

2022-2025

- All child care supervisors will provide evidence of coursework taken toward the completion of a Bachelor's degree in early childhood education or a Director Credential.
- Continue to attract and recruit highly qualified Child Care Assistants/Leads with Early Childhood college credits.
- Evaluate the demand for additional Child Care sites to provide child care or more families

Early Learning

The Bethlehem Area School District is proud to offer universal full-day kindergarten in our 16 elementary schools. We want each child's experience filled with fun and exciting activities that will begin them on the path of successful learning experiences and personal development. Our kindergarten students come from a wide variety of backgrounds and experiences, which is what makes each of them unique and special. Although children go through similar stages in the learning process, we understand that children develop at different academic, social, and emotional rates. Our full-day kindergarten classrooms offer support based on each individual child's needs. Additional information can be found at the following link:
<https://www.basdschools.org/kindergarten>

During the last several school years, the District's focus at the primary level was in the area of literacy. All K-2 teachers received formal LETRS® (Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling) training on Modules 1, 2, and 3, and additional modules will continue to be added in subsequent years. Teachers have also received small-group phonology and phonics instruction that was explicit, systematic, and multisensory. Intensive MTSS support was also provided as well. Training, modeling, coaching, and support will continue in future years.

While the District will continue its work at the primary grade levels, we also recognize the need to work with our outside Pre-K partners, Pre-K parents/guardians, and Pre-K students. As a result, the following events will occur each school year:

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Events</u>	<u>Description</u>
August	Incoming Kindergarten Play Date/Orientation	Event for registered, incoming K parents/guardians and students
	BASD Pre-K Counts Orientation	Event held at Calypso, Donegan, Fountain Hill, and Marvine
September	Kindergarten Literacy Night	Evening event for all local Pre-K and/or child care providers to learn about the BASD's literacy work, professional development, and curriculum
October	Pre-K Parent and Provider Visitation Day	Daytime event held during BASD Education Week for any interested Pre-K parents/guardians and/or Pre-K providers
November and/or December	Fall Pre-K Open House	Evening Open House events held at each individual elementary school for Pre-K parents/guardians, their child, and Pre-K providers
January	Kindergarten Registration begins	Online registration is completed through <i>Registration Gateway</i> .

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Events</u>	<u>Description</u>
March	Pre-K Family Night Session #1 Topic: Print Awareness & Letter Recognition	a 60-90-minute workshop held at each elementary school
April	Pre-K Family Night Session #2 Topic: Vocabulary Building	a 60-90-minute workshop held at each elementary school
	Spring Pre-K Open House	Evening Open House events held at each individual elementary school for Pre-K parents/guardians, their child, and Pre-K providers
May	Incoming Kindergarten Family Welcoming Day	Daytime event for all registered, incoming K students and their parents/guardians
	Pre-K Family Night Session #3 Topic: Early Language & Phoneme Awareness	a 60-90-minute workshop held at each elementary school
	BASD Pre-K Counts & Head Start Transition Day	Events held at Calypso, Donegan, Fountain Hill, Lincoln, and Marvine
	Pre-K Family Night Session #4 Topic: Letter Sounds	a 60-90-minute workshop held at each elementary school

Grants Office

The Bethlehem Area School District is very fortunate to receive funding from a variety of federal, state, and local grants. Although funding is never certain, listed below is a brief description of some of the main funding sources that are anticipated for the 2021-2022 school year and beyond. This list is not inclusive, but it does provide an overview of the main grants that will be applied for during the upcoming school year.

During the 2021-2022 school year, the Bethlehem Area School District's grants office is anticipating approximately \$4,000,000 in federal Title money. **Title I funds** will be used for teacher salaries and benefits, administrative costs, supplies, parent involvement programs, and mandated set-asides at the elementary and middle school level. **Title II funds** will be used for salaries and benefits for class size reduction teachers and staff development opportunities focused on strategies to close student achievement gaps at the elementary and secondary level. **Title III funds** will be used to provide supplemental educational programming for English Learners and immigrant students at the elementary and secondary levels. **Title IV funding** will be used in the areas of safe and healthy students, well-rounded education, and effective use of technology. In addition to this federal funding, Broughal Middle School will also receive over \$500,000 in Comprehensive Support and Improvement funds.

At the State level, the District is anticipating grant funding in several key areas. The **Pre-K Counts grant** provides funding for five pre-kindergarten classes in the District, which are located at Calypso (1), Fountain Hill (1), Marvine (1), and Donegan (2) and service a total of 100 students. **Ready to Learn** funds will be used toward the implementation of full-day kindergarten. Funding from the State's **Keystone STARS** grant will be used to improve the quality of early learning and recognize child care providers who exceed state health and safety certification requirements.

STARS regulations and guidance is also in the process of changing, so the District is awaiting these updates. PDE's **Division of Food and Nutrition** provides schools with assistance in purchasing food service equipment to improve energy efficiency, improve food safety, expand participation, and enhance nutritional quality. The **Marvine Family Center** grant cycle concluded at the end of the 2018-2019 school year, but school districts were provided with a two-year extension. The 2020-2021 school year was the final year of this extension.

At the local level, the District is hopeful that a number of grants will be approved for the 2021-2022 school year. UGI has provided funding annually to assist schools with the **Reading is Fundamental (RIF)** initiative. This funding was always designated to purchase books for all BASD first grade students. The Foundation for the Bethlehem Area School District provides up to \$25,000 for **Teacher Innovation** and **Service Learning** grants. In addition, the Foundation also started a **Leaders of Tomorrow** grant, which allows each elementary school to receive up to \$1,000 toward the implementation of a student-selected project.

In response to the impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on student learning and academic, enrichment and extra-curricular programming, the Federal Government plans to provide much needed support through the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act's Elementary and Secondary Emergency Relief Fund (ESSERII). BASD stands to receive \$16,000,000 to coordinate preparedness and response efforts of BASD, public health departments and other relevant agencies to prevent, prepare for and respond to COVID-19; purchase supplies to sanitize and clean the facilities of our district; plan and coordinate for meal distribution; provide training and professional development for BASD staff on sanitation and minimizing the spread of infectious diseases; activities to address the unique needs of low-income students, students with disabilities, English Learners, racial, ethnic and minorities, students experiencing homelessness and foster care; providing mental health service and supports and purchasing educational technology to aid in regular and remote learning. These are just a few of the ways these federal dollars may be used to address COVID-19.

Facilities and Transportation

FACILITIES

The district's facilities are in good condition overall and able to meet the educational needs of the district and community. Over the next five years, it will be important to balance the resources necessary to preserve and maintain the district's facilities investments while at the same time looking to recapitalize, renovate and improve the oldest facilities. Additionally, the next five years represent an opportunity to continually evaluate the performance of existing personnel, processes, agreements and organizational structures required to meet the educational and operational needs of post-COVID 21st century facilities.

Between 1991 and 2001, the district invested over \$96 million in 18 different buildings. From 2005 to 2011, the district invested an additional \$184 million to renovate both high schools and replace two middle schools and in August 2017, the district opened a new \$55 million Nitschmann Middle School. These investments have served the community well and are the reason our facilities are in such good condition. However, there are several facilities and parts of facilities that have not yet been renovated during the last 30 years and require larger-scale capital planning efforts in the future. Beginning 2021, the district has committed to a focused facility study looking at long term solutions affecting Fountain Hill, Thomas Jefferson and William Penn Elementary Schools. While no funding strategy exists for any large capital projects, planning will begin with the goal to develop facility solutions that meet the educational needs of these communities so there is a plan to renovate or replace these schools when funding becomes available. Despite the challenge of funding large, whole-building renovations and replacements, the district has successfully replaced aging HVAC systems at 2 elementary schools with plans for another in 2021. There are many more projects than funds available, but over the next five years, the district will continue to prioritize replacing aging elementary school HVAC systems and plan for other critical system and envelope repair projects.

With the daunting challenge of funding much needed capital projects, the district cannot afford to lose sight of required preventive and recurring maintenance needs at all facilities. These proactive and low cost (compared to capital expense) maintenance items extend the life of the existing facilities and building systems. One opportunity to meet this challenge is to continue our success building and maintaining a capital reserve account to fund one-time maintenance and repair costs that will extend the life of a facility. The biggest challenge to building a capital reserve account is identifying a recurring revenue source to replace the project funds used year after year to sustain the fund into the future. In the coming years, the district could see a short-term influx of federal funding as part of COVID mitigation and recovery initiatives that may help chip away at some HVAC renovations and preserve precious capital reserve funds. Other funding strategies that must be weighed against other funding priorities include increased general operating budget investment in "summer" projects or borrowing funds to tackle some of the long standing, higher cost projects that cannot be funded with operating dollars. The capital project funding challenge is not specific to Bethlehem, but it will continue to exert pressure on the BASD budget with each passing year as our buildings and systems continue to age.

One successful cost saving and efficiency effort that requires our focused attention is the energy management program. Energy management efforts have yielded a cost savings of \$16.7 million since 2010, but as we emerge from the pandemic and fully return to school, efficiency gains and savings realized prior to the pandemic will give way to new ventilation standards in the name of safety. The improved safety of our school buildings and a return to normalcy over the next several years will far outweigh the loss in energy savings, but over the next five years expect to see energy savings slow as a result. In the future, district energy management efforts will continue the successful three-pronged approach to aggressively reduce consumption; intelligently procure utilities; and invest in energy efficient upgrades. The biggest challenge in this initiative is the continuing battle to change culture and embrace conservation. Fostering a culture of conservation district wide creates a multiplier effect that will benefit both the educational and financial goals of the district. Opportunities to showcase our efforts and build new believers in the cause exist over the next few years engaging with our partners and community through the City of Bethlehem's Climate Action Plan. Operationally, the district will continue to pursue opportunities for high return on investment energy efficiency upgrades as funding permits; however, the challenge is obtaining scarce competing resources for the upfront investment to save more money.

Another opportunity and challenge lies in improving the cleanliness of the learning environment. Studies show a strong correlation between cleanliness and student achievement, so continued improvement in this area has a direct impact on our students' success in the classroom. An added challenge in our battle to provide clean, safe and healthy learning environments is the increased sanitation demand of a post-COVID world. While the disease is not typically spread by surface contact, expectations are sky high to maintain surface cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched surfaces in every school. Over the next five years, we can expect to invest in new tools, techniques and chemicals to extend the reach of custodians and maintain the expectations of pandemic-level cleaning well after students have returned to school. A long-standing but challenging to implement opportunity has been the development of a custodial training program that extends beyond the current in-service schedule. A key ingredient in such a training program includes individual ownership of personal development outside of the work day. Just as teachers need to take college classes on their own time to earn more money and stay relevant, custodians need to stay current and remain relevant by earning credits and certifications at a Facilities Training Academy. Challenges exist in the collective bargaining agreement that may hinder such a program, but our district can only benefit by investing in our people. Improved cleaning processes and development of a training program are key opportunities that will occupy much of the department's energy in providing the high levels of support needed to match the higher expectations required by the Roadmap to Educational Excellence.

From a districtwide perspective, the safety of all staff and students is among the highest priorities in the district. Within the realm of workplace safety and occupational health, fostering a culture of safety is an opportunity we cannot afford to miss. By educating staff about workplace safety, addressing known physical safety issues and focusing on accident prevention, the district keeps its most important resources at work while at the same time reducing expenses. Ensuring that our students and staff go home every day in the same condition they arrived has a huge multiplier effect by reducing lost work time, increasing attendance, preserving employee quality of life and maintaining productivity. Fostering a culture of safety will not only keep people at work, but represents a six-figure savings opportunity in insurance premiums alone from year-to-year that could be reinvested into the classroom.

TRANSPORTATION

The district's transportation department is among the largest district owned and operated fleets in the state. The fleet of 125 buses transports over 9,500 students to and from school each day and logs over 1.1 million miles annually. How far is 1 million miles? That is the equivalent of driving from BASD to Disneyland to Disney World and back every school day! Over the next five years, the biggest opportunities and challenges facing the transportation department include: finding and keeping drivers behind the wheel; driving out operational inefficiencies; fully utilizing routing software; investing in alternative fuel vehicles; and managing the increasing demands on resources to transport more kids to more non-pub and charter locations.

The biggest challenge facing the entire transportation industry is finding qualified bus drivers to replace the retiring workforce and keeping new drivers behind the wheel once we do find and train them. This challenge has multiple cascading effects that make the already challenging job of student transportation even more difficult. The department has built new recruiting, marketing and incentive structures to entice prospective drivers to "Drive Bus with Us", but small gains made on this front have been eroded by the pandemic. The supervision and leadership provided by TransPar have helped the department confront the driver shortage challenge by creating opportunities to grow, development and further deploy the Transportation Recruiting Team; improve and increase marketing of driving opportunities; implement employee referral and sign-on bonus incentives to get the right folks into the training pipeline. Future opportunities to continue the battle for bus drivers lie with changes in the collective bargaining agreement to provide both structure and flexibility that incents drivers to come to work; and updating the compensation plan to attract drivers to "Drive Bus with Us" instead of the competition.

Despite the day-to-day challenges, the department continues to focus on streamlining existing processes and improving efficiencies within the complex logistics of student transportation. The school closures of the pandemic in 2020 afforded the department time to implement and train on the new routing software. As skills improve in using new tools at our disposal, incremental changes to increase the quality of service, and explore continued route optimization will continue with the overall goal of increasing efficiency. Efforts to create more efficient bus routes will focus on new COVID-era ridership patterns and expanding our expertise and knowledge of the routing technologies available to us. The push for continued efficiency is an opportunity we cannot afford to miss in keeping pace with the growing non-public, charter school, and homeless student transportation demands and increasing pressure created by driver shortages.

Over the next five years, another continuing challenge will be maintaining investments in bus replacements. While the district has invested heavily in bus replacements over recent years, continued budget pressure will increase the likelihood that new bus requests will not make it through the budgeting gauntlet. Moving forward, the district must level out the number of bus replacements at a sustainable level of 7-10 per year into the future instead of waiting three to four years before purchasing a block of 30 new vehicles. The next big opportunity with bus purchases includes adding alternative fuel vehicles to the fleet. The alternative fuel transportation options have become more mainstream as costs decrease and grant opportunities increase. Clean energy grants are available to offset the purchase of fueling stations as well as garage conversions and actual vehicle costs. During budget discussions each year, the need to continue bus replacements must not be overlooked.

Another challenge facing the transportation department is the increase in the number of students requiring transportation outside their attendance area. These include non-public and charter school students as well as special education and homeless students. Over the last several years as non-public and charter school enrollments have grown, so have the requirements to deliver more students within 10 miles of the district borders as required by state law. In addition to the district's 22 schools, the transportation department delivers students to 45 additional charter, non-public and parochial schools, many of which are located outside the district's boundaries. In addition, the district is subject to special education decisions made in the best interest of students regardless of location and state decisions to place homeless students who must be provided transportation independent of any district input or distance between placements and school. Unfortunately, the number of homeless students has exploded during the pandemic. To tackle this challenge, the district is looking to expand purchases of student transportation vans that can pick-up and transport these challenging single-student requirements without the need for a CDL driver or large school bus. Opportunities to recruit more CDL drivers, improve routing efficiency, replenish the fleet and recover charter students will help manage transportation challenges into the future.

Finance

In support of the BASD Mission, and in concert with the Board, staff and community, many challenges are facing the financial success of BASD schools and public education within Pennsylvania. Several issues are specific to our local schools and community while many other significant challenges are resulting from state/national concerns or mandates. Yet, the financial challenges resulting from the COVID-19 recession and economic shutdowns will continue for some time.

As we consider the five-year budgetary projections, we must consider many recession unknowns related to local revenues combined with the natural expenditure growth from programmatic mandates, cost of living, contractual obligations, aging facilities, healthcare and PSERS increases, a structural deficit is clear in that the natural growth of our tax base limited by Act 1 is not keeping pace with the natural growth in existing costs. While savings yielded through ongoing review of operating budgets and savings in core personnel contracts and services has allowed resources to be reallocated to key instructional programs, limited and uncertain revenue growth will not be adequate to sustain the existing programs without material change to the key cost drivers of mandates and systemic changes.

In response to the pandemic economic recovery and ongoing taxpayer appeals, the Board continues a proactive approach to fair and equitable assessments in both counties by reviewing properties that appear to be significantly undervalued to current market value where the anticipated increase in assessed value would generate additional tax revenue above a predetermined value. This process, called municipal or reverse tax appeals, is permitted when uniformly applied to challenge a property's assessed value in the same fashion as the taxpayer. By evaluating all properties that are materially under assessed, we will restore equity to taxation thereby increasing revenue and the proportionate burden on the average taxpayer to support their public schools. We have been successful in negotiating representative and equitable assessments in fifty-four parcels that were contested generating \$3.8 million additional annual revenue for operational needs.

This revenue effort, however, is offset by ongoing taxpayer initiated real estate assessment appeals which have reduced the overall tax base and revenue over the past several years due primarily to the change in the Common Level Ratio. This is a state determined ratio that compares recent sales transactions as an indicator of current market value to the assessed value. This factor tends to increase the longer it has been since a county wide reassessment. Lehigh County has completed a countywide reassessment effective with the 2013 tax year which reset this base value to 100% of current market values. As a result, BASD has equalized the millage rate assessed for school taxes in Lehigh County creating different tax rates for our two counties. This has a budgetary impact on BASD tax revenue in future years as the mandated rebalancing limits the ability to generate the full index revenue.

Our partnership with City of Bethlehem and Northampton County for the BethWorks TIF in South Bethlehem has been tremendous generating \$37.75M for our schools over the 20-year agreement to develop the former Bethlehem Steel brownfields. This revenue sharing agreement to supplement development in the region expired in December 2020 with great economic and community benefits. Going forward, we will continue to monitor all new development in that region and surrounding areas with the LERTA industrial development and potential expansion of the WindCreek hotel in the future.

Ancillary growth within and adjacent to this area will provide additional resources as the overall tax base expands. Additional growth is anticipated at the former Martin Tower property with the development of expanded retail and residential centers proposed in a City Redevelopment Improvement Zone (CRIZ). While all future employment income taxes are restricted by the CRIZ terms, future real estate tax will be payable increasing future revenue.

We will continue to look for alternative sources of revenue from all areas including increased involvement and fundraising with The Foundation for the Bethlehem Area School District, outside marketing, donations, grants, and fees for services to sustain our valuable educational and student programs. Additionally, to help offset the ever increasing cost of charter school tuition payments, we will actively pursue the growth of our BASD cyber and hybrid learning opportunities to attract and retain students who desire an alternative to the traditional classroom setting within BASD. This will continue to be a significant challenge however, as more financial incentives are offered to alternative and private schools encouraging growth in new charter school opportunities with further diversion of sizable education funding away from our local public schools. The flawed funding formula for charter schools exponentially increases this concern as annual increases are compounded by the previous year's charter tuition increase as well as the full expense for BASD's retirement contribution to PSERS which is rising dramatically each year through the peak of 38.17% of payroll in 2028. A higher tuition is paid for special education students by an arbitrary inflation factor that is not related in any way to the true cost of educating special needs students attending charter schools. The only true resolution to this continued funding increase is through legislative action to amend the tuition formula for statewide charter education. Advocacy through the legislative process may help to educate our representatives to the burden that is placed on local school districts faced with choosing between funding this steep increase for a few students while sacrificing education programs for the overall majority of public school students.

People are the largest expense in public schools which rely upon core staff to teach as well as maintain the schools to provide high quality educational services to our students and community. With this high reliance on personnel comes a high cost associated with compensation and benefits. We will need to work proactively on the cost of total compensation as we address upcoming collective bargaining agreements to manage costs going forward. Through the Bethlehem Area Employee Benefit Trust, we have reduced our administrative costs through a statewide consortium of self-insured Healthcare Trusts while providing added financial security of stop loss insurance for catastrophic claims. Collectively we have also leveraged our market share to acquire a lower cost prescription benefit management program that includes more aggressive discounts off the average wholesale price for medications and increased formulary rebates to reduce plan costs. These efforts have allowed us to reduce or hold rates constant for the past five years. The inherent structure of an employee healthcare trust also provides for greater involvement in the benefit decisions and shaping employee behavior that will ultimately add to the ownership of the plan and its operation generating cost saving programs that are a win-win for all.

The next highest staffing cost is PSERS which is projected to rise as high as 37.23% of payroll during this next five years climbing steadily to \$25 million annually. Clearly, this type of increase in any expense will become the focus of debate and pose a risk to all other educational programs. The funding for the significant increases has been incorporated over the past several years and ultimately the millage necessary to fund this annual recurring cost must be built into the tax base in order to be sustainable going forward. Act 5 of 2017 amended the PSERS program for all new hires mandating a hybrid plan design. This change, however, will not provide any relief to the funding rate increases for decades as the accumulated deficit must be addressed through prospective benefit changes only.

While no one could have projected a global pandemic and its impact on local economies, there is also no clear understanding of the duration or shape of the economic recovery. Pennsylvania's Independent Fiscal Office recently estimated that payroll employment will require six years to reach pre-recession levels.¹ While this is representative of statewide indicators, careful monitoring of the local regional and School District economy will be ongoing to determine our direct impact and recovery. We are fortunate to have a very diversified local economy in Bethlehem not reliant on only a few key industries. Our growth in logistics and interstate commerce during these times as well as strong healthcare sectors will be key to mitigating any hospitality losses during closures.

Favorable interest rates for consumers resulting from Federal Reserve rate reductions has also helped to significantly motivate local housing markets. Continued growth in new construction and existing home sales as well as home improvement growth will be an important offset to the payroll tax reductions from lost wages and lost interest income to sustain operational costs.

Designating funds to help mitigate pandemic revenue losses and mandated increases is possible due to the improved overall financial health of BASD. While we must continue to be proud of the courageous decisions that resulted in achieving the targeted fund balance of 6.4% as of June 30, 2020, we cannot lose sight of the significance of maintaining this level for proven financial stability within the financial community. Our ongoing experience with Standard & Poor's clearly evidenced that simply reaching the target is not sufficient for bond ratings. It is clear that BASD must prove that we can continue to maintain this stability for the long term and not fall prey to the temptations of the past to spend down the fund balance to avoid the tax levies needed to sustain ongoing financial commitments.

This is even more evident where both Moody's and S&P have withdrawn their ratings of BASD and many other PA public schools relative to the PA Intercept program that guarantees school bond payments due to the Commonwealth's inability to adopt an annual operating budget, thereby providing no financial support for our public schools and other state programs. Specifically, they cited the state's history of late budget adoptions with only three on time budgets in the last 14 years; three of which exceeded 100 days. Without our strong tax base, sound fund balance levels and stable financial condition, weathering this type of funding delay would be detrimental to maintaining a seamless educational system for our students.

While the Board has been diligent in systematically reducing the overall debt burden, there are still insufficient resources available to pay our debt obligations if called at once. The financial community is well aware of the financial condition of the Commonwealth, the history of reduced state funding and the looming pension increases. These existing deficits have been further exacerbated following the 2020 pandemic employment loss. This imbalance presents great temptation to spend down the newly acquired fund balance which would undermine our ability to continue the planned reduction of variable rate debt for improved overall financial health. The three remaining Floating Rate Notes (FRN) are will be renewed November 2021 in alignment with the expiring LIBOR index. While markets have largely indicated SOFR is the new index, pricing implications are still unclear.

¹ http://www.ifo.state.pa.us/download.cfm?file=Resources/Documents/Five_Year_Outlook_2020.pdf

Understanding these expectations, however, should not deter our need for capital improvement planning. Although we have a higher than average debt burden, the result is that BASD has outstanding facilities most of which have been renovated or replaced over the past decade. This investment in our community and its public schools adds much value to the BASD tax base by the increased marketability of residential homes due to our great public schools. This investment, however, must be maintained regularly to avoid deterioration and a loss of investment. Sound financial planning must include prioritization of any annual budgetary surplus to be considered for transfer to the Capital Reserve Fund to allow for ongoing preventative maintenance on our facilities to insure they will last for our children's children. Using the Capital Reserve Funds wisely affords us the resources to systematically finance various projects further outlined in the Capital Improvement Plan that include upgrades of aging and inefficient HVAC systems, roof replacements, technology infrastructure and security.

Expected grants from the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Funds to schools in Pennsylvania to address COVID-19 needs is welcome relief but must be managed carefully to avoid devastating financial losses when these one-time grants expire. Current funds have been used to provide protective equipment and sanitation supplies allowing our schools to reopen in a hybrid learning model. In support of students unable to return to classrooms, these grants have also funded staff to support an eClassroom program for fully remote instruction during this 2020-21 school year. Future funding for COVID relief is planned to continue support of these flexible learning models as well as upgrades to existing HVAC systems in our schools as investments in our capital assets for long term improvements. This also avoids using these funds to support ongoing operational expenses that continue beyond the grant creating a funding cliff without sustainable and ongoing revenue to support normal operations.

We are most proud of the academic achievements in the areas of STEM learning with Project Lead the Way in both Engineering and Bio-Medical as well as our success in the Reading by Grade 3 initiative. These successes relied upon a financial investment; but moreover, the investment in retraining of our staff who have dedicated their professional commitment to the growth of our students. This academic foundation is the springboard for actionable skills and college and career readiness for our graduates. This learning is enhanced through our Empower initiative that provides personal tablet computers for all students to enhance their access to all online curriculum during and after school. The access to global learning will serve to ignite, encourage, and empower all students' academic growth in all areas. Our fortuitous investment in these programs clearly positioned BASD to swiftly pivot student learning in these most challenging times avoiding serious learning loss while keeping our students engaged in learning with their teachers.

Finally, we cannot lose sight of the need to plan for the regular replacement of aging and obsolete equipment. Annually, we must evaluate the need for investment in recurring equipment cycles such as school buses, preventative maintenance, technology, band uniforms, etc. Acknowledging that resources are limited and demands many, continued failure to fund this replacement equipment puts our students' safety at risk and hinders their continued educational success. We will review all possible methods to finance these ongoing needs balanced together with the mandated obligations for the benefit of our students along their road to academic excellence.

Five Year Plan Decision Points
February 2021

CATEGORY	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
5-Year Budget Projections	Exp \$301,993,643 Rev \$301,993,643 Less PSERS & Charter Impact \$2,676,631 Net Cumulative Surplus \$2,676,631	Exp \$304,428,137 Rev \$304,428,137 Gap \$ -0- Less PSERS & Charter Impact \$ 2,686,804 Net Cumulative Surplus \$ 10,172	Exp \$318,507,806 Rev \$304,589,012 Gap \$ -13,918,794 Less PSERS & Charter Impact \$3,595,993 Net Cumulative Gap \$ -10,332,973	Exp \$329,292,255 Rev \$314,700,706 Gap \$ -14,591,549 Less PSERS & Charter Impact \$3,131,218 Net Cumulative Gap \$ -21,793,304	Exp \$340,372,215 Rev \$323,551,251 Gap \$ -16,820,964 Less PSERS & Charter Impact \$3,286,367 Net Cumulative Gap \$ -35,327,901	Exp \$352,212,099 Rev \$331,552,744 Gap \$ -20,659,356 Less PSERS & Charter Impact \$3,563,662 Net Cumulative Gap \$ -52,423,594
	Monitor shape and timing of local financial recovery following COVID-19					
	Monitor Growth in Charter School Costs, Advocate Funding Reform & Find Alternate Delivery Options to Retain Students					
	Manage effective use of COVID Relief funding to maximize benefits while avoiding structural revenue deficits					
	Mitigate Loss from Assessment Appeals					
	Annually evaluate need for investment in recurring equipment cycles such as school buses, preventative maintenance, band uniforms, technology, etc					
	Research and Implement Alternative Revenue Sources including The Foundation, donations, grants, external marketing, fees for service, etc.					
PSERS	34.51%	34.94%	35.62%	36.12%	36.60%	37.23%
Act 1 Index (Adj)	3.2%	3.7%	3.9%	4.0 %	4.1%	3.9%
Healthcare	Monitor Cost Impact of Federal Healthcare Policy					
	Discuss Plan Design Considerations for Cost Saving/Sharing					
Fund Balance – Funding of Capital Reserve Fund	Determine Annual Budget Surplus for Transfer to Capital Reserve Fund annually by June 30 to fund ongoing capital improvements					
Facilities		Dec 2022 – Natural Gas contract expires		July 2023 – Electricity contract expires		
Debt Service		Aug 2021 2011 Ref Nov 2021 FRN Renewal			Nov 2024 FRN Renewal	
Transportation	Attract-Hire-Retain Sufficient Qualified Bus Drivers	July 2020 – Replace 10 buses*	July 2021 – Replace 10 buses*	July 2022 – Replace 10 buses*	July 2023 – Replace 10 buses*	July 2024 – Replace 10 buses*
		* Subject to annual budget approval				
CBA Expirations	June 2021 – Clerical – Custodial	June 2022 – Instructional Admin– Bus Drivers	June 2023 – Teachers Food Service – Teacher Assistants			

Human Resources

The Human Resources function in the Bethlehem Area School District continues its development in order to most effectively meet our objectives in leading and supporting expanding organizational effectiveness, strategies and goals, recruitment and retention targets, employee expectations, BASD Roadmap-Built By Bethlehem, excellence through equity and ever-increasing state mandates.

Organizational goals in future years requiring leadership from HR include:

Labor Relations: CBA renewals

- Six collective bargaining agreement renewals as follows:
 - 2021: Clerical and Custodial/Maintenance
 - 2022: Transportation
 - 2023: Teachers, Ed Support Personnel, Food Service
- Two Act 93 Agreement renewals as follows:
 - 2021: Non-Instructional
 - 2022: Instructional
- Maintaining positive relations with local unions and business agents/PSEA uniserv reps.

HR Department Succession Planning

- The current HR staff consists of eight members. One will retire this year. Three others will retire within the next 2-5 years.

Staffing

- Staffing and placement work in light of curricular program additions and innovations, such as has been done in recent years with elementary Spanish, American Sign Language, digital literacy and Reading-By-Grade 3. In the next couple of years, middle schools will be revising programs and high schools anticipate additional blended learning offerings, especially in light of our experience during the pandemic.
- Talent development and succession planning for current and anticipated administrative retirements, particularly within the principal ranks and central office leadership teams.
- Maintenance of labor market competitiveness in all areas, but particularly with both contracted and substitute teachers, teacher assistants, bus drivers, and support positions substitutes.
- New approaches to sourcing the best talent available, including diverse candidates.
- In 2021 we are implementing Frontline Technologies' Recruit and Hire product, which will enable us to improve our efforts around advertising, sourcing, recruiting and selection

Employee Benefits/Wellness

- Recruiting an experienced HR professional to succeed Carole Hall upon her retirement in July 2021.
- Continued cost control in the employee benefits arena, building on recent years' successes, while offering a very competitive, attractive benefits package to aid recruiting and retention.
- Wellness initiatives to decrease sick time, leaves, and medical expenses.

Organizational Development and Culture

- Continuing increased focus on equity initiatives, including the development of a more diverse faculty.
- Management training and development for all A&S supervisory personnel, particularly in the “soft skills”, building leadership capacity, supervisory skills/effectiveness and legal compliance.
- Greater capacity and productivity from district support staff through improved employee training and development.
- Periodic review of organizational structure and re-design that most effectively supports district objectives.
- Enhanced operating standards for exiting through resignation, including exit interviews/surveys. The goals are to obtain feedback on employee experiences while employed by the district and to influence what former employees have to say about us in the community.
- Improved internal data and reporting to assist us in strategic planning and decision making.

Human Resources Development and Training

Given our central mission, state requirements and the particulars of compensation for professional employees, the district has dedicated internal and external resources and significant budget dollars devoted to training and professional development of teaching staff. We do not have a resource dedicated to driving and coordinating training and development of support staff. This should be addressed within the time span of this plan.

The district’s onboarding efforts for non-teacher new hires is mixed. Although each new hire receives an individual HR orientation to benefits and new hire processes, what occurs after that varies greatly. We need to do more in this area, particularly for non-instructional personnel.

Compliance

Prime examples of recent and continuing state mandates within the realm of HR are the requirements regarding educator and administrator certification standards, evaluations under Act 82, including teacher specific student growth scores; the renewal of employment clearances every five years; training requirements around child abuse awareness, suicide awareness, Title I revisions, security personnel and PIAA coaching training. We also provide annual mandated state reporting on educator and principal evaluations (TPES), PIMS staffing, Act 45/48 compliance, district equity plan, and civil rights reporting.

HR Leadership Challenges

The following factors speak to the particulars of our district that provide for HR leadership and management challenges beyond most other districts and many private organizations:

- The demands and expectations on the part of the state and society generally of school district personnel along with the lack of adequate state funding to support those demands and expectations are stretching our human resources to their limits. This requires increasing creativity to meet objectives and greater leadership and attention from management to maintain focus and a positive work climate.
- We are one of the largest employers in the greater Lehigh Valley. We currently employ just under 1,900 FT and PT staff, in 25 locations. We require large substitute employee labor pools.
- We are governed by a complex and ever-changing system of federal and state regulations, as well as board policy, school code, Collective Bargaining/Act 93 Agreements.
- The particulars of these various agreements have historically prevented an organization wide approach to most human resource issues including job placement, compensation, medical benefits, paid holidays, paid time off, disability payments, etc. We have made and continue to make significant strides in desired alignment as we renegotiate these agreements.
- We continue to maintain in-house programs for operational functions such as food service, transportation, as well as childcare, which present special HR/management challenges.
- While we enjoy certain benefits from having a long history and many long service employees, this fact can and often does present impediments to needed change. A strong sense of “past practices” is a significant challenge for management when implementing and/or succeeding prior administrations.

Human Resources

Office of Child Accounting

The Office of Child Accounting department's main responsibilities for the district include supervising the registration process, reporting membership data to the state for reimbursement, reconciling tuition invoices from charter and other LEAs, invoicing other LEAs for tuition, and developing enrollment projections and other enrollment reports.

Other areas of responsibilities include supervising the issuance of work permits and answering questions from families or employer on Child Labor Law, maintaining educational records and transcripts, advising on federal law regarding homeless children and youth, managing residency compliance and settling disputes, determining school assignments within the district and supervising the Home Education Program.

Our plans for the upcoming years include:

1. Streamline the internal processes for Records Requests, Open Enrollment, Out of District Grades, and Home Education Program
2. Research options to receive electronic payment for transcript request
3. Continue providing reports to management for data analysis from projections to enrollment reports to other district needs
4. Continue to assist the district with state reporting requirements
5. Continue cross training to provide support as needed within the department
6. Continue co-facilitating at secretary in-service training meetings
7. Continue to aggressively pursue fraudulent residency claims through both leveraging in-district personnel and contracting with private investigators

Information Services Department

Information Services

The Information Services Department continues to make improvements across the district's technology systems and infrastructure. Such improvements, amid resource and financial constraints, supports the ongoing implementation of the Vision and Strategy plan of the district. Stabilization of the wireless and internal networks is always a focus, as it impacts every student, teacher and administrator. The continuation of server virtualization and implementation of numerous cloud-based services helps to maintain system reliability and efficiency while reducing overall cost of ownership.

ISD continues to focus on improving process efficiency, maintaining up-to-date technology, and reducing costs associated with a large enterprise environment. The use of digital resources requires continued integration between the instructional and information technology resources. ISD continues to balance user requests, district needs, and a constrained budget while keeping pace with a rapidly changing technology landscape. Through continued staff development and use of enterprise solutions, ISD can deliver economically sustainable and efficient solutions to the BASD students, faculty, and staff.

The K-12 technology landscape continues to change at a quick pace requiring nimble resources able to quickly respond to new technology and processes. This effort requires a continuing commitment to staff development across the district, both for the personnel supporting the end users and for the end users themselves who must then implement the technology in their daily classroom environments. This integration must be an ongoing shift in culture, operation, and direction to provide the competitive edge to the district that it should.

BASDNet, the district's consolidated digital network, continues to evolve to sustain current and future communication needs. Instructional applications and systems share information between BASD's Student Information System, Active Directory, and online learning platforms to provide a robust digital environment for BASD staff and students.

Technology at BASD continues to evolve and adapt, requiring periodic adjustments to the plan. Each of these changes requires strong commitment from the instructional and support departments within the district.

Core Technology (Wireless, Network, Server)

BASD continually improves its district-wide wireless capabilities. The district's core network and switch environment leverage the district's leased dark fiber to provide high-capacity data links between each building. In addition, the district's two high-speed Internet links ensures redundant capacity for online services. Continuous improvements only solve part of the challenge. The other half of the equation focuses on the district's data center and centralized computing services.

BASD maintains two data centers, one at Freedom High School and another at Nitschmann Middle School. Capital improvements coupled with the continually evolving virtualization technologies helps to reduce environmental costs while at the same time improving system efficiency. Through continually evolving virtual servers and economical centralized storage, the district is able to build a modular “private cloud”. This approach allows for staggered upgrades of the individual virtual cluster components without requiring downtime.

The current virtual environment supports over 100+ “virtual servers,” each of which would take up space, power, and HVAC capacity in a traditional physical environment. Through virtualization, the total power usage by the two data centers supports the goals of increased efficiency while reducing overall cost.

Asset Sustainability

Having devices capable of leveraging the wireless infrastructure is also important. Chromebook technology brings economical devices that can serve as a foundation for a regular asset refresh program. This is important to ensure the availability of updated technology for students in support of the district’s goal to enable online and blended learning.

The district has standardized on certain wireless device models for staff as their primary device. Device standardization allows for efficient training and support. It also positions BASD for a 4-5-year regular technology refresh cycle that has a more predictable technology budget.

Service Desk and Technology Governance

The Service Desk is a central point for reporting, resolving and managing technical incidents. The Information Services Department uses this system and support staff to ensure staff and student productivity. Metrics from the system can reveal trends of system and hardware failures. Governance on project prioritization and resource scheduling remain a priority given the personnel, financial, and time constraints across the district.

Technology governance plays an important role in ensuring that technology decisions consider the larger district/enterprise view. Service Level Agreements (SLAs) set the expectation to the faculty and administration for issue response and resolution. BASD continues to embrace online learning through its partnership many educational online learning platforms. Each educational online learning platform has a specific set of technology requirements that may overlap but require functional equipment and connectivity to access. The district operates as an enterprise going forward to ensure every student has equitable access to the technology they need when they need it.

Application and System Integration

The district's technology roadmap is based on three key pillars:

- Active Directory - authoritative source for authenticating a user's rights to access applications and electronic resources
- The district's Student Information System (SIS) and authoritative source for student data and information
- The district's many educational online learning platforms that are authoritative sources for eLearning content

These three components form a foundation from which all other applications, systems, and services must link. These are an integral part of future planning across the district's grade levels. BASDNet standardizes both student and faculty user credentials, including facilities for self-service reset and administration. Continued integration of these three components allows the district to build new technology capabilities while maintaining the existing core environment at a financially sustainable rate.

The district continues with a forward-thinking approach to technology systems. Academic and curricular programs exist mainly online, and ISD must work with district leadership to ensure that these programs fit together with the existing technology framework. In addition, by leveraging these authoritative data sources, the district moves towards business intelligence as a critical tool for equitable decision making in support of the Vision and Strategy plan of the district.

Pupil Services

Health Services, Student Services, and Special Education

In support of the BASD mission and Roadmap to Educational Excellence, the Pupil Services Department is committed to remove barriers and to create opportunities for student success by providing programs that support the whole student academically, behavioral, socially, emotionally, and physically. Through various support and services, the department works collaboratively with all stakeholders to give ALL students what is needed to achieve success and to become productive citizens.

The Pupil Services Department is comprised of school counselors, school psychologists, school nurses, special education teachers, teachers of the mentally gifted, special education instructional assistants, speech and language teachers, attendance officers, educational support teachers, ACCESS Program Assistant, Coordinators of Special Education, Director of Special Education, and Director of Student Services & Minority Affairs. These highly experienced professionals provide a network of services within each school to ensure all students obtain the knowledge, skills, and experience to succeed and become responsible citizens in an ever-changing global society.

Overall, the Pupil Services department recognizes the need to expand partnerships to provide an integrated student support model with a strong link between health and wellness, so students have the ability to fully engage within the learning environment as each student works towards productive citizenship.

Special Education, Gifted Education, 504 Service Agreements

- **To Provide Quality Support, Services, and Instruction to Students and Staff**

Special Education staff and teachers of the Gifted provide quality support, services, and instruction to students with unique learning styles to ensure that students will be better prepared to participate successfully in the general education curriculum with rigor and high expectations. This is accomplished through consultation, collaboration, coaching, and/or direct instruction depending on the student's specific needs.

The Special Education organizational administrative infrastructure allows central office personnel to focus on specific programs with an emphasis on a K-12 approach to quality instructional practices, program delivery and supervision to allow for greater fidelity, consistency, and compliance across all areas of special education mandates and district initiatives. Additionally, professional development and support to all teaching staff surrounding best practices with students with an exceptionality (disability and giftedness) is a central mission to continuing to improve the success of students in all educational environments.

- **To Provide Individualized Student Instruction and Interventions**

By utilizing the extensive BASD curriculum resources available (Wonders, Lexia, IXL, MobyMax, Zones of Regulation) in both core instruction and intervention, staff will continue to address the specific, individualized learning needs of students in the academic, behavioral and social/emotional domains through direct instruction and case management. Informed by research and IDEA, BASD students will continue to be educated in the Least Restrictive Environment, accessing the core curriculum and general education settings to the maximum extent possible while also intervening meaningfully to increase student progress in areas of deficit.

For students in need of more supportive settings, BASD is cooperatively involved with multiple partners including the CIU20, and university partners such as Lehigh University. Through close cooperation and collaboration, BASD students, regardless of the severity of need, have access to high quality instruction and support for all exceptionalities.

Planning for the transition of students with special education needs into consecutive grade levels, and ultimately into the community is an essential component of contributing to their success. Instruction and support of students to live independently, access post-secondary education and become employed is a large component of the strategy of designing students' individualized education plans. BASD's special education staff is integrally involved with community resources and partners to assist students in reaching their potential not only within school but post graduation.

- **To Implement Multi-Tiered Support System (MTSS)**

A unified Student Assistance Program and Multi-Tiered System of Supports, BASD/SAP, continues to be implemented at all levels which provides a sustainable infrastructure that contributes to the achievement of all students within our schools, K-12. A resource website is available to enhance the team's ability to meet the student needs by providing a plethora of tools along with videos for educators and parents to enhance their knowledge of the process.

Center for Humanistic Change (CHC), a community agency, provides a PA-SAP liaison to all schools as part of this process. CHC provides multiple SAP training throughout the year to the District at no cost. The SAP liaison works with schools to identify at-risk students and provide support to break down the barriers to their success. CHC provides schools the opportunity to conduct behavioral health screenings utilizing the BHWorks through Drexel University to identify students for behavioral support.

By removing the barriers to learning through data-based problem-solving and collaborative interventions, students are being identified with appropriate interventions, supports, and services.

- **To Maximize ACCESS Program**

ACCESS, Medicaid reimbursement program, continues to revise procedures to meet yearly program changes to maximize reimbursement for allowable services. This program assists in funding necessary equipment and services for special education students: i.e., curriculum materials, mental health/counseling, related services.

Student Services

- **To Increase Internal and Community Supports and Services through Partnerships**

Integrated Student Support services is currently implemented at six (6) schools by Communities in Schools of Eastern PA (CIS). The Site Coordinator works to create a network of supports by working directly with teachers, families, services agencies, and local companies focusing on student academic, behavior, and attendance.

Pinebrook Family Answers provides licensed social workers at both high schools. PBFA collaborates and consults with CIS and the school based teams to identify the students that are in need of counseling.

The Community School model has been a productive way for BASD to provide children and their families with the support and services they need for success in school. This is a partnership between the district, United Way, local businesses, universities, and community organizations that helps to integrate academics, youth development, family support, health and social services and community development to improve student learning, create stronger families, and ultimately a healthier Bethlehem community. Currently, we have seven (7) Community Schools and two (2) schools supported with an Americorp VISTA (Volunteers In Service to America) to lay the foundation for a Community School. Leverage the assistance of school counselors and attendance officers as part of internal services to increase student engagement in school.

- **To Increase Mental Health and Behavioral Health (MH/BH) Services**

Mental health and behavioral health services remain a priority focus within the district. To meet this priority, the district has partnered with St. Luke's Behavioral Health, Lehigh Valley Health Network, and Colonial Intermediate Unit #20 to provide out-patient mental and behavioral health services. All twenty-two (22) schools have been certified as an out-patient clinic. Discussions are on-going with Magellan to assist students who have insurance issues in accessing services.

The Community Voices Clinic (CVC) is a school-based mental health clinic operating within the family centers at Donegan Elementary and Broughal Middle schools. The CVC offers free individual, family, group, and couples' therapy to uninsured and underinsured residents of South Bethlehem who would otherwise be unable to access treatment. The clinic is fully staffed by doctoral and master's level students in counseling psychology from Lehigh University. Lehigh University contracts with Colonial IU#20 Resolve Behavioral Health to provide clinical supervision.

- **To Support a Culturally Responsive, Antiracist and Equitable Environment for Students and Staff**

District policies and procedures are reviewed through an antiracist and equity lens, to identify and streamline responsibilities while creating an infrastructure that provides efficiency and sustainability of services to meet the whole student. Professional development is provided to staff to develop awareness and knowledge to apply culturally responsive, antiracist and equitable practices and intersectionality, implicit biases in classroom practices. Opportunities have been provided for students to share their narratives around race and its intersection with other identities. The District continues to conduct collaborative work with community partners such as Lehigh University, United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley, and the Lehigh Valley Community Foundation within this area.

- **To Build Trauma Informed Schools**

Training and supporting teachers regarding trauma, restorative justice, social emotional learning with an intentional focus on anti-racism, culturally responsiveness, and equity practices is a high priority. To increase appropriate social skills while decreasing discipline issues, teachers provide direct instruction in the area of social emotional learning.

The elementary level implements a tiered approach with the philosophy and framework of Leader In Me (LIM), based off of Franklin Covey's 7 Habits of Highly Effective People. An LIM coach works directly with each school to ensure consistent and intentional delivery of the framework and incorporates social emotional learning and antiracism. Zones of Regulation, teaches students to recognize their feelings and to use tools and strategies to regulate their feelings. Zones is implemented in both a Tier 2 (group instruction) and Tier 3 (individualized) manner for students in need. Second Step, a social-emotional curriculum has been added as a Tier 2 intervention for students in need of more intensive support in social and emotional learning.

Restorative Practices (RP), a process to repair relationships that have been damaged is implemented at the secondary level. RP provides a sense of remorse and **restorative** action on the part of the offender and forgiveness by the victim.

A professional development plan will be developed to address these areas to sustain implementation and capacity. These frameworks along with Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) have been embedded into the Framework for Citizenship. A district team continues to meet to review and update the Framework in order to be more age and developmentally appropriate with the emphasis of teaching appropriate behaviors and identifying the appropriate consequences, positive and negative.

- **To Provide Alternative Educational Opportunities**

Administration works collaboratively to determine an alternative educational placement for at-risk students struggling behaviorally before expulsion is recommended. Student services monitors the district's in-house expulsion program, Evening Alternative Program (EAP), which provides educational services to students who have been expelled due to extreme and rare violations within the Framework of Citizenship. Students receive district curriculum utilizing restorative, trauma-informed and culturally responsive practices with the goal to transition back into school or graduate.

A structured plan to develop a strategic expansion and maintenance of current community resources, partnerships, and internal supports will be developed. Data will be collected and analyzed to ensure progress in addressing mental health and the effectiveness of our trauma informed initiatives.

Health Services

- **To Increase Evidence-Based Health Care through an Integrated Health Model**

The health services model integrates community services that supports the overall well-being of the student. A committed health service staff provides daily care for both chronic and acute concerns, mandated screenings, and supports tertiary level care with community agencies. These services include the Star Wellness dental van, St. Luke's mobile medical van, and vision vouchers including free eye exams for students in need. Relationships with Moravian, Cedar Crest, DeSales, East Stroudsburg, and Northampton CC allow us to increase student support services, screenings, and quality health instruction for our students. To educate student nurses from the various programs, a training video was produced to ensure accurate health screenings. In addition, health services continues to partner with the Bethlehem Health Bureau to ensure that all students meet state immunization requirements along with providing flu vaccines to staff.

- **To Re-establish the Comprehensive Strategic Health Plan**

Prior to the pandemic, the District in conjunction with St. Luke's and the Bethlehem Health Bureau, was in the process of developing a Comprehensive Strategic Health Plan to coordinate current and future student services that align and maximize physical, mental and behavioral health providers to assist the district in providing services in an equitable way using a collective impact model. A discussion with the partners will occur to review, revise, and determine how to move forward.