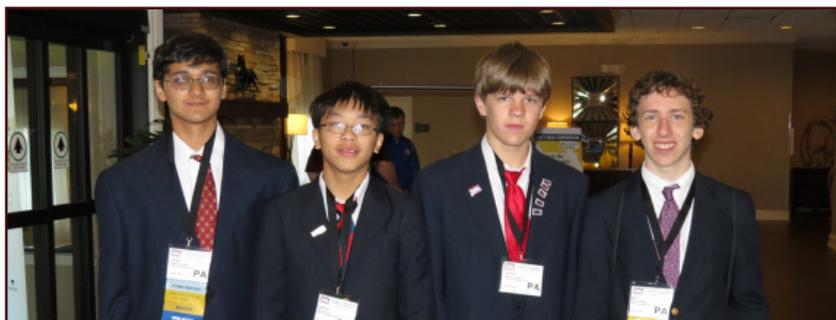




# State College Area School District

State College, Pennsylvania

## Discover! Pursue! Excel!



## Our 2014-2017 Instructional Focus

The State College Area School District is proud of its tradition of academic excellence and service to the greater community. Yet, in spite of our long-standing record of achievement, we remain committed to innovation and continuous improvement of our programs, services, and supports for our students.

During the 2013-2014 school year, our district engaged a representative cross-section of our community in a strategic planning exercise to refine our direction for the next three years. Nearly 150 people – students, parents, teachers, support staffs, administrators, business/higher education partners, community representatives, district-level leaders, and members of our school Board – participated.

The strategic planning process reaffirmed our district's Goals for student achievement and development as follows:

- **S**ignificant academic and personal growth for every student
- **C**ollege- and career-ready graduates
- **A**chievement in the arts, sports, clubs, and activities
- **S**afe and supported learners
- **D**emonstrated commitment to self, community, and global citizenship.

This **Instructional Focus** is the roadmap accomplishing those Goals. It is built on **Four Pillars**; namely:

1. **Culture of Trust, Relationships, and Collaboration**
2. **Responsive Teaching and Learning**
3. **High Expectations for All**
4. **Welcoming and Safe Climate for Learning and Work**

The Instructional Focus is a statement of our ongoing commitment to continuous improvement of teaching practices, leadership practices, and organizational practices because they are the precursors to continuous improvement of student learning.

Our schools are places where we learn from our successes as well as our failures. Through focused implementation, collaboration among stakeholders, and continuous improvement of the professional practices outlined in this Instructional Focus document, our district will realize its Goals for student learning and will move that much closer to accomplishing our core mission: **preparing every student for lifelong success through excellence in education.**

Robert J. O'Donnell, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools

January 2014

At **SCASD**, we exhibit a **passion for empowering every student** – every day – with individualized opportunities for **growth and success in a connected world**.

Our central Mission is to *prepare students for lifelong success through excellence in education*.

Our Goals are clear:

- Significant academic and personal growth for every student
- College- and career-ready graduates
- Achievement in arts, sports, clubs, and activities
- Safe and supported learners
- Demonstrated commitment to self, community, and global citizenship

### Vital Signs of Student Progress

- A. Student **perseverance, determination, and passion for learning**
- B. Student **critical thinking, collaboration, and problem-solving**
- C. Student **“voice” and reflectiveness**
- D. Closing the **“achievement gap”** and enhancing **growth for all students**
- E. **Successful transitions** (across learning experiences & environments, including grade-to-grade, levels, newness to school/district, post-secondary, etc.)

### Our 2017 Benchmarks

1. At least 18 out of every 20 students (90%), at every grade level, report that they look forward to coming to school every day.
2. All students report that they are passionately engaged in challenging activities.
3. At least 19 out of every 20 students (95%) have meaningful connections to school through extra-/co-curricular activities or community involvement.
4. All students demonstrate acquisition of 21st Century skills and authentic learning (including academic, non-academic, and citizenship experiences).
5. At least 15 out of every 20 underperforming students (75%) achieve grade-level success in ELA, Math, and Science, based on multiple measures.
6. All students (100%) demonstrate at least one year's growth every year, based on multiple measures.
7. Comprehensive plans for successful student transitions between organizational levels exist and are communicated, implemented, reviewed, and revised on a yearly basis.
8. All graduates are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and understanding to participate as active citizens in a global society.

# SCASD ... Discover! Pursue! Excel!

# PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES

As practitioners, we are committed to continuous improvement of our Teaching Practices, Leadership Practices, and Organizational Practices because they are the preconditions for higher levels of student achievement. Our “Four Pillars” are the building blocks of our professional practices; they frame what we must do well in every classroom, in every school, and system-wide to ensure success for all students, without exception.

## Teaching Practices

## Leadership Practices

## Organizational Practices

### Pillar #1

We will build trust and relationships with open communication that promote effective collaboration among all partners in the teaching and learning community.

## Culture of Trust, Relationships, and Collaboration

T1: Teachers and staff will work collegially to enhance practices that promote a high-achieving, caring, supportive environment.

L1: The leadership team will provide time, resources, and support to teachers regarding mindset and skills for effective collaboration.

O1: School/district leadership will provide training and opportunities for staff, parents, and community on collaborative partnering and shared decision-making.

T2: Teachers and staff will communicate regularly with parents and students as equal partners in supporting students' education and well-being.

L2: The leadership team will demonstrate consistency and fairness to provide a structure for open communication that fosters collaborative partnering and shared decision-making.

O2: School/district leadership will develop structures for regular one- and two-way communication among all partners in the teaching and learning community.

### Pillar #2

Curriculum, instruction, and learning are shaped by a growth mindset and guided by principles of differentiation.

## Responsive Teaching and Learning

T3: Teachers and staff will use varied materials, tools, and resources to support instruction and engage students in meaningful learning.

L3: Educational leaders will ensure that teachers have access to instructional resources and varied assessments.

O3: School/district leaders will allocate time for training, collegial collaboration, and preparation for responsive instruction.

T4: Teachers and staff will adapt curricular content, process, and products to support students' readiness, interests, and learning styles.

L4: Educational leaders will design professional development with significant teacher input to facilitate effective implementation of responsive teaching and learning.

O4: School/district staff will engage in scheduled year-round discourse and reflection on instructional practices.

### Pillar #3

Beliefs and practices reflect universally held high standards and shared responsibility for continuous growth and improvement.

## High Expectations for All

T5: Teachers and staff will establish continuous professional learning goals and seek out opportunities for growth and development.

L5: Principal will schedule and protect “sacred time” for staff instructional planning, data driven collaboration, and professional development.

O5: The school/district will develop a cadre of school and district leaders who have attained mastery of core leadership practices and will facilitate the learning of other administrators and teachers.

T6: Teachers and staff will communicate realistically high expectations for all students and ensure high student engagement in learning.

L6: Leadership will frequently emphasize in classrooms, at staff meetings, all school gatherings, and parent conferences that effective instruction and student learning are the highest priority for everyone.

O6: School/district leaders will ensure that families and community are aware of the schools vision and expectations for learning.

### Pillar #4

Learning occurs in safe environments that support the needs of all students and adults and provide a welcoming environment where positive academic and prudent personal risk-taking are encouraged.

## Welcoming and Safe Climate for Learning & Work

T7: Teachers and staff will provide a safe and accepting environment.

L7: Administrative Team will annually assess and respond to data about school climate from students, parents, and school personnel.

O7: The District and community will build systems to link educators, students, parents, and caregivers to create a school climate that is safe, accepting, and caring.

T8: Teachers and staff will provide the time, encouragement, and strategies necessary to help all students be connected.

L8: Principal/Administrative team will assure that every student is connected to a caring adult.

O8: The District and community will develop a full continuum of integrated systems of interventions to promote academic learning and healthy development for all members of the school community.

# Vital signs & look-fors

*What is measured and reinforced gets done!*

By paying attention to the Vital Signs of Student Learning and Professional Practices, we will be able to monitor and communicate progress, improve practices, and celebrate our successes.

Student Learning	Teaching Practices	Leadership Practices	Organizational Practices
<p><b>Growth on Assessments</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decrease “achievement gap” among student subgroups.</li> <li>Students demonstrate growth on multiple forms of assessments.</li> <li>Student assesses learning progress against student’s own expectations.</li> </ul> <p><b>Application of Learning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase percentage of students who demonstrate mastery of 21st Century skills.</li> <li>Students apply knowledge to solve problems in new situations.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Rigorous Learning Activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers use effective strategies and plan instructional tasks that encourage higher level thinking.</li> <li>Teachers design instruction and activities that meet the needs of all learners.</li> </ul> <p><b>Relationships with Students</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers communicate realistically high and positive academic and behavioral expectations for all students.</li> <li>Teachers communicate caring for and interest in students’ welfare and learning.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Teacher Professional Growth</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grade-level/department teams meet for blocks of time sufficient to develop and refine instructional plans and review student learning data.</li> <li>Educational leaders create and monitor a differentiated Professional Development Plan aligned to Instructional Focus and Vital Signs.</li> </ul> <p><b>Team Collaboration</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teams establish and follow protocols for discussion of student work and data analysis.</li> <li>Principal attends grade level and department meetings at least once each month.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Resources Aligned to Priorities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase time and funds allocated to the improvement of teacher/ leadership effectiveness.</li> <li>School Schedule maximizes time spent on quality instruction.</li> </ul> <p><b>Culture of Achievement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognize teachers and staff for improvements in student learning and professional practices.</li> <li>Staff and administrators regularly acknowledge students and celebrate growth in achievement.</li> </ul>