



**STATE COLLEGE AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT
ADMINISTRATION OFFICES**

131 W Nittany Avenue • STATE COLLEGE PENNSYLVANIA • 16801
TELEPHONE: 814-231-1016 -- FAX: 814023104130

To: Board of Directors

From: Bob O'Donnell

Date: November 5, 2015

Re: Strategic Plan Benchmark Update

Attached is an analysis of the district-wide surveys reflected upon the strategic plan's benchmarks. On Monday, Dr. Fuller will be joining us to discuss the attached report.

Please know that this report is focused on benchmarks 1 - 4, 7 and 8. For benchmarks 5 and 6, we will have an update to you in the near future that will include performance K-12 data, as well as a conversation regarding the recent School Performance Profile report for State High.

ASSESSING THE STATE COLLEGE AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT BENCHMARKS IN THE 2013-2017 STRATEGIC PLAN

November, 2015

**Ed Fuller
Educational Leadership Program and
Center for Evaluation and Education Policy Analysis
Penn State University**

INTRODUCTION

This document attempts to assess the State College Area School District's Benchmarks for the 2013-14 through 2016-2017 academic years. The Benchmarks were created by approximately 150 community members during multiple group meetings. The members included students, parents, teachers, support staffs, administrators, business/higher education partners, community representatives, district-level leaders, and members of our school Board. The group affirmed the District Goals of:

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

With respect to the Instructional Focus, the group developed four pillars:

- 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

In addition, the group delineated eight 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 under-performing students (75%) achieve grade-level success in English Language Arts (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.

The remainder of the document attempts to analyze the available data regarding the Benchmarks. Measuring progress towards meeting the benchmarks is difficult for four primary reasons.

- First, not all of the Benchmarks were written in a manner that was measurable.
- Second, the Strategic Plan Survey was written to assess the Four Pillars, not the eight Benchmarks. Thus, for many of the Benchmarks, there are not survey statements that directly assess the construct included in the Benchmark.
- Third, the district simply does not have the data infrastructure to collect, create, and analyze the data that would be needed to measure some of the Benchmarks.
- Fourth, some of the Benchmarks cannot be measured accurately without a substantial fiscal investment in developing new measures of achievement.

Despite these limitations, we attempt to measure the Benchmarks as best as possible based on the available data. Five of the Benchmarks (1, 2, 3, 4 and 8) are assessed through the Strategic Plan surveys. For these five Benchmarks, the results are organized by school level (Elementary and Secondary) and by Respondent (Student, Teacher, and Parent). The response rates for elementary students and all teachers are high enough to yield information that is generalizable to the entire population of students and teachers. In fact, the response rates exceeded 90% for these groups. The response rates for middle school students exceeded 85% for all statements. Unfortunately, the response rate for high school students was less than 33%. This makes the results for secondary students (middle school and high school combined) not generalizable to the entire population of secondary students. Finally, less than 20% of parents responded to the surveys. Thus, the parent results must be interpreted with caution since they represent only a small sample of individuals that are not generalizable to the entire SCADS population of parents.

ANALYSIS

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.

Elementary

As shown below, the available evidence suggests that this Benchmark is currently not being met. Far less than 90% of students indicate that they enjoy going to school. This result, however, may be a consequence of the timing of the survey rather than an accurate indication of students' true feelings about going to school. This belief is bolstered by the results for a new statement added in last year's survey: "There is at least one good thing about school that makes me want to go every day." A far greater percentage of students (75%) responded positively to this statement, thus suggesting the true perspective of students is greater than the percentages for the other two statements.

As shown in Tables 2 and 3, adults — both teachers and parents — were far more likely to perceive that students enjoy going to school. Indeed, based on adult perceptions, this Benchmark is being met. Our conclusion is that this Benchmark is being partially met and that the District is making improvements in meeting this Benchmark, but additional data should be collected to garner a more accurate assessment of this Benchmark.

Students

Table 1: Percent of Elementary School Students Responding "Yes" or "Definitely Yes" to Statements regarding Student Perceptions of Enjoying Going to School

Statement	2014	2015	Change
I like school.	61.0	63.3	2.3
I look forward to going to school.	52.9	55.8	2.9
There is at least one good thing about school that makes me want to go every day.		75.3	

Teachers

Table 2: Percent of Elementary School Teachers Responding "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" to Statements regarding Student Perceptions of Enjoying Going to School

Statement	2014	2015	Change
Students enjoy coming to school	97.5	96.7	-0.8

Parents

Table 3: Percent of Elementary School Parents Responding "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" to Statements regarding Student Perceptions of Enjoying Going to School

Statement	2014	2015	Change
My child enjoys going to school	93.7	85.6	-8.1
There is at least one thing that makes my child interested in going to school.		90.2	

Secondary

As with the evidence at the elementary school level, the available evidence at the secondary school level suggests this Benchmark is currently not being met, but progress towards meeting the Benchmark is being made. Note that almost 80% of student respondents did indicate that there is at least one thing that excites them about going to school. As at the elementary school level, the timing of the survey may yield inaccurate data about students' true perceptions.

In contrast to the elementary school level, the adults at the secondary level indicate that they do not perceive that students enjoy going to school. Consistent with student perceptions, about 80% of parents indicated that there is at least one thing that makes students excited or interested in going to school.

Thus, we conclude this Benchmark is not being met. There is conflicting evidence about whether progress towards meeting this Benchmark is being made. The best evidence about potential progress does suggest that progress is being made—there was a 16.8 percentage point increase in the percentage of students reporting that there is at least one thing that excites them about going to school and a small, albeit not statistically significant, increase in the percentage of students reporting that they like school once they get there.

Students

Table 4: Percent of Secondary School Students Responding “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” to Statements regarding Student Perceptions of Enjoying Going to School

Statement	2014	2015	Change
I look forward to going to school.	38.9	39.2	0.2
Once I am at school, I usually like being there.	44.3	47.0	2.7
There is at least 1 thing that excites me about going to school	62.9	79.6	16.8

Teachers

Table 5: Percent of Secondary School Teachers Responding “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” to Statements regarding Student Perceptions of Enjoying Going to School

Statement	2014	2015	Change
Students enjoy coming to school	61.9	68.3	6.4

Parents

Table 6: Percent of Secondary School Parents Responding “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” to Statements regarding Student Perceptions of Enjoying Going to School

Statement	2014	2015	Change
My child enjoys going to school (MS)	74.7	68.1	-6.6
There is at least one thing that makes my child interested in going to school. (MS)		82.1	
My child enjoys going to school (HS)	69.3	57.9	-11.4
There is at least one thing that makes my child interested in going to school. (HS)		77.3	

2. All students report that they are passionately engaged in challenging activities.

Elementary

While none of the student survey statements directly addressed this Benchmark, the results for eight statements do provide some information related to this Benchmark. The results for the eight statements in Table 7 suggest that the vast majority of elementary school students perceive that they are engaged with the schooling process and that the curriculum and instruction encountered by students makes them think hard. The most disconcerting evidence is that only about 75% of students responded that the work they do in class makes them think. This result, however, may be because students did not completely understand the statement. When analyzed as a group, 57% of students responded “yes” or “definitely yes” to all five statements and another 19% responded in the same manner to four of the five statements. While the Benchmark provides no specified percentage, these results suggest that the vast majority of students perceive they are passionately engaged in challenging activities but that much more progress needs to be made related to this Benchmark.

As with the student survey, the teacher survey did not directly address this benchmark. There were, however, seven statements that provided indirect information about this Benchmark. As shown in Table 8, the results for teachers were far more positive than for students. Most interesting is the difference in the percentage of teachers that responded positively to the statement about ensuring all students are actively engaged in the learning process and the percentage of students that responded that they pay attention in class.

Again, the parent survey did not directly address this Benchmark. However, as shown in Table 9, about 80% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that teachers hold high expectations for each and every student. This was lower than for either students or teachers.

The available evidence suggests that this Benchmark is being met—at least for many students. However, the available evidence also suggests that not all students are passionately engaged in challenging activities. Thus, there appears to be room for improvement in this area.

Students

Table 7: Percent of Elementary School Students Responding “Yes” or “Definitely Yes” to Statements Regarding Passionate Engagement in Challenging Activities

Statement	2014	2015	Change
My teacher expects me to try my best.	98.0	98.0	0.0
The work I do in class makes me think.	76.3	75.3	-1.0
I try my best at school.	92.5	91.6	-0.9
I pay attention to my teacher in class.	82.3	83.3	1.0
There is at least one good thing about school that makes me want to go every day.		75.3	
My teacher makes learning fun.	78.1	76.5	-1.6
My teachers help me when I need it.	89.1	89.2	0.1
My teacher makes our class interesting.	81.1	79.3	-1.8

Teachers

Table 8: Percent of Elementary School Teachers Responding “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” to Statements Regarding Passionate Engagement in Challenging Activities

Statement	2014	2015	Change
In this school: Teachers hold high expectations for each and every student.	84.7	93.0	8.3
I consistently try to: Ensure all students are actively engaged in the learning process during class.	99.0	99.4	0.4
We ensure that all students have equitable access to a high-quality curriculum.	86.8	94.2	7.4
We ensure that all students have equitable access to high-quality instruction.	87.8	93.1	5.2
Teachers hold high expectations for each and every student.	84.7	93.0	8.3
Teachers are held to high professional standards for delivering instruction.	84.2	93.6	9.4
I feel confident about my ability to: Improve student effort/motivation.	94.4	94.6	0.3

* Green shading indicates a statistically significant improvement from 2014 to 2015

Parents

Table 9: Percent of Elementary School Teachers Responding “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” to Statements Regarding Passionate Engagement in Challenging Activities

Statement	2015
Teachers hold high expectations for each and every student.	79.9

Secondary

As was the case at the elementary school level, the secondary school surveys did not include any statements specifically addressing this Benchmark. There were, however, seven statements on the student survey that indirectly provided information about this Benchmark. As shown in Table 10, less than 50% of the students responded positively to three of the seven statements and less than 60% responded positively to three of the remaining four statements. Thus, the available information suggests that many students are not passionately engaged in challenging activities — at least with respect to academic activities. In fact, having less than 60% of students perceive that teachers have high expectations for all students and that teachers push them hard as individuals indicates this is an area of challenge for secondary schools. In support of student perceptions about being passionately engaged in challenging activities is the finding that only 65% of students perceive that their teachers really enjoy teaching. This begs the question: If teachers are not passionately engaged in teaching, should we expect students to be passionately engaged in learning? Further related to the interest level of students was the finding that less than 50% of students agreed or strongly agreed that teachers told students why they are learning specific material and relate the material to the future interests of students.

Interestingly, only about two-thirds of teachers perceived that teachers hold high expectations for all students. This result substantiates the perception of students that teachers do not hold high expectations for all students. The fact that only 80% of teachers believed that they were held to high professional standards may indicate an issue with administrator expectations for effective teaching. A similar percentage of teachers also responded positively that secondary educators ensure that all students have access to a high quality curriculum and high quality

instruction. Thus, a fair proportion — around 20% — perceive that expectations for quality teaching are not held for all teachers and not all students have access to quality teaching.

When disaggregated by school level, the results for students are far more positive at the middle school level than the high school level.

Overall, this Benchmark is being partially met and there remains substantial progress that needs to be made. There is some indication from teachers that improvement is being made in this area, although no such evidence exists from the student survey at either the middle school or high school levels.

Students

Table 10: Percent of Secondary School Students Responding “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” to Statements Regarding Passionate Engagement in Challenging Activities

Statement	2014	2015	Change
My teachers have high expectations for all students.	56.3	57.3	1.0
My teachers push everybody to work hard.	60.9	56.1	-4.8
I usually try my best at school.	76.0	75.8	-0.2
My teachers push ME to work hard.		59.0	
My teachers: Tell us what we are learning and why.	45.3	46.0	0.7
My teachers: Connect what we learn to my future interests.		44.1	
My teachers: Know what my personal interests are.		45.2	

Teachers

Table 11: Percent of Secondary School Students Responding “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” to Statements Regarding Passionate Engagement in Challenging Activities

Statement	2014	2015	Change
Teachers hold high expectations for each and every student.	66.5	66.2	-0.3
I consistently try to: Ensure all students are actively engaged in the learning process during class.	91.5	96.4	4.9
We ensure that all students have equitable access to a high-quality curriculum.	74.8	79.3	4.5
We ensure that all students have equitable access to high-quality instruction.	76.0	79.2	3.2
Teachers hold high expectations for each and every student.	66.5	66.2	-0.3
Teachers are held to high professional standards for delivering instruction.	75.9	80.1	4.2
I feel confident about my ability to: Improve student effort/motivation.	74.1	78.9	4.8

* Green shading indicates a statistically significant improvement from 2014 to 2015

Parents

Table 12: Percent of Elementary School Teachers Responding “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” to Statements Regarding Passionate Engagement in Challenging Activities

Statement	2015
Teachers hold high expectations for each and every student.	69.9

3. At least 19 out of every 20 students (95%) have meaningful connections to school through extra-/co-curricular activities or community involvement.

Elementary

A majority of teachers and parents perceived that students had some meaningful connections to the school through non-instructional activities such as sports and clubs. While the percentages are high, they likely fail to meet or exceed the standard of 95%. Thus, this Benchmark is being partially met, although we need to collect more definitive evidence about this Benchmark. The District should be directly connecting participation evidence about each child and each activity.

Students

No statements assess this.

Teachers

Table 13: Percent of Elementary School Teachers Responding “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” to Statements Regarding Connection to the School

Statement	2014	2015	Change
We offer a wide variety of non-classroom activities so that all students can be involved in the school community.	67.2	75.0	7.8

Parents

Table 14: Percent of Elementary School Parents Responding “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” to Statements Regarding Connection to the School

Statement	2015
Extra-Curricular activity connected to the school--athletics/sports	40.7
Extra-Curricular activity connected to the school--band, drama, debate	45.5
Co-Curricular activity connected to the school--clubs & organizations	24.2
Community-based activity through the school--sports	65.3

Secondary

Of the secondary school student respondents, 80% indicated that they had participated in either extra- or co-curricular activities. A majority of teachers and parents perceived that students had some meaningful connections to the school through non-instructional activities. While the percentages are high, they likely fail to meet or exceed the standard of 95%.

Students

Table 15: Percent of Secondary School Students Responding “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” to Statements Regarding Connection to the School

Statement	2015
I participated in (extra-curricular/co-curricular) activities	80.0

Teachers

Table 16: Percent of Secondary School Teachers Responding “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” to Statements Regarding Connection to the School

Statement	2014	2015	Change
We offer a wide variety of non-classroom activities so that all students can be involved in the school community.	85.5	85.8	0.3

Parents

Table 17: Percent of Secondary School Parents Responding “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” to Statements Regarding Connection to the School

Statement	Middle School	High School
Extra-Curricular activity connected to the school--athletics/sports	58.8	49.2
Extra-Curricular activity connected to the school--band, drama, debate	54.0	42.3
Co-Curricular activity connected to the school--clubs and organizations	52.7	60.0
Community-based activity through the school--sports	53.5	30.0

4. All students demonstrate acquisition of 21st century skills and authentic learning (including academic, non-academic, and citizenship experiences).

Elementary

Based on teacher responses, students are being taught 21st century skills. Indeed, the percentage of teachers responding with agree or strongly agree was greater than 90% for all but three of the statements. However, given the disconnect between teachers and students shown for other statements and the disconnect between teacher and student perceptions in this area at the high school level, we must be cautious in making conclusions based on results from only one group of individuals. Overall, at the elementary school level, this Benchmark is mostly met. Moreover, the evidence suggests that substantial progress is being made in this particular Benchmark area.

Students

No statements assess this.

Teachers

Table 18: Percent of Elementary School Teachers Responding “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” to Statements Regarding 21st Century Skills

Statement	2014	2015	Change
We teach students to: Learn from their mistakes.	91.8	97.1	5.3
We teach students to: Communicate effectively (writing and speaking).	95.4	98.8	3.4
We teach students to: Evaluate information critically and competently.	87.2	95.9	8.7
We teach students to: Deal positively with praise, setbacks and criticism.	87.2	93.7	6.4
We teach students to: Understand global issues.	58.3	73.5	15.2
We teach students to: Understand, negotiate and balance diverse views and beliefs to reach workable solutions.	73.6	85.5	11.9
We teach students to: Use technology as a tool to research, organize, evaluate and communicate information.	92.3	95.9	3.6
We teach students to: Access information efficiently (time) & effectively (sources).	87.0	95.3	8.2
We teach students to: Work with a partner or in groups.	95.9	97.7	1.8
We teach students to: Interpret information and draw conclusions.	89.1	97.1	8.0
We teach students to: View failure as an opportunity to learn.	80.5	88.4	7.9
We teach students to: View success as a long-term, cyclical process of small successes and frequent mistakes.	78.1	90.8	12.7

* Green shading indicates a statistically significant improvement from 2014 to 2015

Parents

No statements assess this.

Secondary

In general, the responses of both students and teachers would suggest that both groups generally agree that students are being taught 21st century skills. Students, however, had lower rates of agreement than did teachers. Indeed, only two of the 23 statements had percentages that exceeded 75%. Moreover, while there was some improvement in the levels of agreement for students, there was dramatic improvement in the responses of teachers. Thus, not only are teachers more positive than students about ensuring students are learning 21st century skills, they are also more positive about making improvements in these areas. In sum, this Benchmark is being partially met, but there is still room for improvement.

Students

Table 19: Percent of Secondary School Students Responding “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” to Statements Regarding 21st Century Skills

Statement: 21st Century Skills	2014	2015	Change
Teachers teach us to: Learn from our mistakes.	63.3	63.2	0.0
Teachers teach us to: Communicate effectively (writing & speaking).	66.5	67.9	1.4
Teachers teach us to: Use information accurately.	74.4	74.5	0.0
Teachers teach us to: Analyze and evaluate alternative points of view.	66.1	68.2	2.1
Teachers teach us to: Deal positively with praise, setbacks, and criticism.	58.0	59.9	1.9
Teachers teach us to: Understand global issues.	52.8	56.2	3.4
Teachers teach us to: Use technology as a tool to research, organize, evaluate and communicate information.	74.1	75.7	1.6
Teachers teach us to: Work together in teams.	64.0	68.5	4.4
Teachers teach us to: Research a topic in-depth.	65.7	70.4	4.7
Teachers teach us to: Look at a problem/issue from multiple different viewpoints.	58.0	62.6	4.6
Teachers teach us to: Interpret information and draw conclusions.	67.1	69.3	2.2
Teachers teach us to: Solve different kinds of unfamiliar problems in both familiar and innovative ways.	58.3	60.3	2.0
Teachers teach us to: See making mistakes as a learning opportunity.		60.9	
Teachers teach us to: Understand how our community is connected to the state, nation, and world.		54.7	
Students discuss a topic from multiple viewpoints.	53.2	55.0	1.8
Students give feedback to other students to help them improve their work.	47.9	51.6	3.7
Students solve a new problem creatively.	49.8	52.3	2.5
Students develop solutions to real world problems in our community.	42.4	45.2	2.7
Students work with a partner or in a small group.	75.1	77.4	2.4
Students learn to be reflective about their own behaviors.	49.5	52.5	2.9
My teachers: Make sure we are learning the life skills to be successful.		52.4	
My teachers: Make sure we are learning to be active citizens		44.5	

* Green shading indicates a statistically significant improvement from 2014 to 2015

Teachers

Table 20: Percent of Secondary School Teachers Responding “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” to Statements Regarding 21st Century Skills

Statement	2014	2015	Change
We teach students to: Learn from their mistakes.	64.6	72.0	7.4
We teach students to: Communicate effectively (writing and speaking).	82.1	90.0	7.9
We teach students to: Evaluate information critically and competently.	71.9	84.4	12.5
We teach students to: Deal positively with praise, setbacks and criticism.	58.4	72.0	13.7
We teach students to: Understand global issues.	51.4	64.4	13.0
We teach students to: Understand, negotiate and balance diverse views and beliefs to reach workable solutions.	56.5	68.4	11.9
We teach students to: Use technology as a tool to research, organize, evaluate and communicate information.	85.6	90.4	4.8
We teach students to: Access information efficiently and effectively.	76.2	79.9	3.7
We teach students to: Work with a partner or in groups.	86.0	91.9	5.9
We teach students to: Interpret information and draw conclusions.	76.9	87.1	10.2
We teach students to: View failure as an opportunity to learn.	46.7	55.0	8.3
We teach students to: View success as a long-term, cyclical process of small successes and frequent mistakes.	49.8	59.4	9.6

* Green shading indicates a statistically significant improvement from 2014 to 2015

Parents

No statements assess this.

5. At least 15 out of every 20 under-performing students (75%) achieve grade-level success in English Language Arts (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.

For norm-referenced tests such as MAP, it is nearly impossible for all students to show at least one year’s growth. Even for criterion-referenced tests such as PSSA and Keystone, growth is generated in a way that places all students on a normal curve. Thus, it is impossible for all students taking currently available tests to make one year’s worth of growth. In fact, given the wide array of abilities within SCASD, even the use of a pre- and post-criterion referenced test would make assessing one year’s worth of growth for every student exceedingly difficult.

7. Comprehensive plans for successful student transitions between organizational levels exist and are communicated, implemented, reviewed, and revised on a yearly basis.

The district has published documents about transitions between schools and has adopted programs and procedures to improve the experiences of students transitioning from one school level to another.

8. All graduates are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and understanding to participate as active citizens in a global society.

Elementary

There was not any data available to assess this Benchmark at the Elementary school level.

Secondary

The only available direct evidence about this Benchmark came from a single statement on the 2015 survey. As shown in Table 21, only about 45% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that teachers were making sure that students were learning to be active citizens. The low level of agreement could be the result of a lack of definition provided for “active” citizen.

Parents were asked about their perceptions of the degree to which they felt that the school district prepares graduates well for life after high school. While this statement does not directly address the construct of being an active citizen, one could infer that this construct includes the idea of being an active citizen. Regardless, only about 69% of middle school parents and 60% of high school parents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.

Thus, the available evidence suggests that this Benchmark is not being met and substantial progress would need to be made to meet this Benchmark.

Students

Table 21: Percent of Secondary School Students Responding “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” to Statements Regarding Being an Active Citizen

Statement	2015
My teachers: Make sure we are learning to be active citizens	44.5

Parents

Table 22: Percent of Secondary School Students Responding “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” to Statements Regarding Being an Active Citizen

Statement	Middle School	High School
I feel that the school district prepares graduates well for life after high school.	68.9	59.7

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the available evidence suggests that most of the Benchmarks are being partially met and that they are being met to a greater degree at the elementary school level than at the secondary level. However, we must temper our assessment of these Benchmarks, given that there is not a sufficient amount of evidence that directly assesses the Benchmarks to make any definitive conclusions. Moreover, the Benchmarks were set without examining any available

evidence prior to adoption and some of the Benchmarks simply are not measurable with available data.

The Benchmark with the strongest evidence of being met is related to the teaching of 21st century skills. Both students and teachers perceive that many (although not all) students are being taught these important skills.

There is also evidence that some progress is being made with other Benchmarks, particularly from the perspective of teachers. Thus, the available evidence suggests educators are addressing the areas addressed by the Benchmarks.

Finally, the Board of Directors, Superintendent, and the entire District should be commended in engaging in a true Strategic Plan effort, including an assessment of progress. The District could very easily operate on auto-pilot and be satisfied with the substantial amount of evidence that SCASD is a high-performing district. District leaders, however, have chosen to reflect on both the strengths and areas of challenge in the District and to endeavor to seriously address the areas of challenge and make dramatic improvements in an effort to maximize the potential of the District in educating the community's children. Few districts ever do this and even fewer ever make the results public. Thus, regardless of the outcomes of any analyses of strengths and weaknesses, a huge strength of the District is courageous leadership to publicly discuss the strengths and areas of challenge of the District.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The above results suggest a number of recommendations. These suggestions are delineated below in three broad areas: Stay the course with the Strategic Plan; Improve data collection and align measures of progress; and Focus on high expectations.

Stay the Course with the Strategic Plan

- The District should continue to take the Strategic Plan process seriously and continue to make the results public. Within this effort could be additional outreach efforts to include the ideas and perceptions of parents and community members.
- The District should continue curriculum alignment and curriculum upgrading. This is important work, and consistency in this area should result in better learning experiences for kids.
- The District should continue efforts to identify students struggling academically and emotionally and provide effective resources to meet the needs of those students.
- The next Strategic Plan should build on the additional information about the areas of strength and challenge that is now available, and focus intently on the areas of challenge uncovered by the current Strategic Plan process.

Improve Data Collection and Align Measures of Progress

- The district needs to continue to invest in developing a data infrastructure to better assess these Benchmarks and other areas of student experiences and achievement throughout the PK-12 continuum.

- For the next Strategic Plan, the current survey results should serve as the basis for discussion and inform the targets included in the Benchmark statements. In addition, statements that are directly aligned with the Benchmarks should be included in the Strategic Plan surveys.
- Systematic focus group and interview data needs to be collected from students at all levels to better inform leaders as they try to identify areas of strength and challenge.
- Data analysis should include a greater focus on the experiences and achievement trajectories of underperforming students, including economically disadvantaged students, English Language Learner students, students with an Individualized Education Plan, and students who perform in the bottom 15% of the achievement distribution.

Focus on High Expectations

- The survey results suggest that expectations for adults and children need to be heightened. Thus, for all adults in the District, there should be an increased focus on raising expectations for everyone to have high expectations regarding the implementation of the Four Pillars.
- Ensure that providing a *Welcoming and Safe Climate* for students and parents is non-negotiable with respect to every classroom within every school in the District.