Introduction

In a normal year, the purpose of this Annual Mid-Year Report is to provide a current overview of the District and status updates through the lens of the five key District elements. Over the years, it has been beneficial to use this report as an opportunity to look back on some highlights of the work accomplished in the past, assess the present status of work underway, and share potential future opportunities. In addition to presenting this report to the Board of Directors during the January workshop, this report will be shared with the District community when it is posted on the District website.

This year, in light of the pandemic and everything associated with operating schools despite never-before seen challenges, the Annual Mid-Year Report takes on an additional purpose of capturing the events related to the District response to the key challenges it has faced. The content presented in the initial sections of the report, focused on the Mission, Vision, and Shared Beliefs of the District, have never been more instrumental in guiding our decisions and helping to identify our path forward.

Mission of the Ephrata Area School District

It is the mission of the Ephrata Area School District to provide all students a secure learning environment and exemplary academic programs that inspire all students to reach their full potential.

District Vision

"Achieving Success One Student at a Time"

Shared Beliefs

This collection of statements is intended to reflect our current understanding of our context and the relevant ideals that are essential to consider in our work. These beliefs serve as common influences in the decisions we make and the direction in which we progress.

1. Public Education is the SHARED PARTNERSHIP among student, family, school, and community.
2. TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS help support the social/emotional needs of our students and are essential to our overall success.

3. A HIGHLY SKILLED, COMPASSIONATE, and EMPATHETIC STAFF is an invaluable component of our school district.

4. TECHNOLOGY can be a powerful instructional and learning tool.

5. The rapidly changing world increases the importance of SKILLS and DISPOSITIONS.

6. Learning happens most rapidly when it is PERSONALLY RELEVANT and AUTHENTIC.

7. A GROWTH MINDSET should be modeled and promoted.

Five Key Elements of the System

1. *Students* are the fundamental purpose for public education, and preparing them to be LIFE READY by the time they leave us is our ultimate goal. Graduates prepared to be contributing and productive members of society are the outcome of achieving our Mission.

2. *Staff* members, at every level, are the most important factor to directly impact the student experience. Supporting teachers and staff members in reaching ever-increasing expectations is one of the key responsibilities of District Leadership.

3. Our comprehensive *Instructional Program* is the path to achieving our Mission. Through continued efforts to incorporate modern tools, engaging instructional techniques, and meaningful targets as outlined in the Life Ready Graduate profile, we strive to provide each student a relevant learning experience that is unique to his/her strengths, needs, interests, and aspirations.

4. *Organizational Operations* represent the alignment between and among the different components of the District. In addition to the importance of alignment and consistency is the establishment and maintenance of both the safe and efficient physical facilities as well as a culture that rewards innovation and strategic risk-taking.

5. *Relationships* with individuals and groups both within and throughout the District community are important in our ability to realize our Vision. Through active memberships in professional networks and organizations aligned with our work, we can learn with and influence the external factors that impact public education.

Past, Present, and Future Analysis

Using these Five Key Elements as the lens for reflection, what follows is a brief list of highlights that represent key accomplishments from the past, some of which are ongoing, and a few topics of work presently underway. Additionally, opportunities in the foreseeable future are provided as a reminder of the continuous improvement element of our District culture. While many of the items presented involve more than one of the Key Elements, an attempt has been made to present each in the category that is most aligned with the topic. Noted with a gray highlight throughout this section are initiatives that have been substantially impacted, cancelled, postponed, or re-invented due to the COVID-19 pandemic and related parameters.

New for the mid-year report is an attempt to demonstrate an alignment among the Five Key Elements framework and our District Shared Beliefs. Following each of the items listed within each of the tables included in the body of this report, there is a Shared Belief (SB) number, one to seven, to represent the Shared Belief with which it is most closely aligned.

Students

Past & Ongoing	1. Student Government meetings (SB1) 2. Assistant Superintendent Council (SB1) 3. Coding Contest and Computer Science events (SB4) 4. Mounts Tech Support (SB4) 5. Life Ready Graduate (LRG) Certificate Program (SB5) 6. Attollo Programs (SB7) 7. LRG Dispositions integration – Family Groups and Disposition Days (SB5) 8. Continued inclusion of student voice in decision making (SB1) 9. Expand the number and variety of internship opportunities (SB6)
Present	1. Incorporate findings and insights from the sleep study, surveys, and presentations into the Healthy Living, Wellness & Self-Awareness trait of the Life Ready Graduate profile. (SB5) 2. Provide opportunities for students to demonstrate mastery of content in authentic ways personalized to the student through the implementation of competencies and learning targets. (SB6) 3. Empower students to more actively participate in education decisions impacting what and how they prepare for productive adult life through the use of a digital career portfolio and Cornerstones at the High School. (SB6) 4. Identify and organize instructional activities, feedback opportunities, and collections of evidence for each grade-level and subject area or course with respect of each of the 12 traits of the Life Ready Graduate profile. (SB5)
Future	1. Continue to expand the inclusion of students to lead and represent the District in presentations at the local, regional, and national levels. (SB2) 2. Involve students in reflective dialogue about the topics of Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity and how their individual experiences can inform our collective work at supporting ALL student toward their full potential. (SB2) 3. Launch the "Ephrata Innovates" program for students to offer suggestions and pilot programs that are more closely aligned to the District Vision, Mission, Shared Beliefs, and the features of the Life Ready Graduate. (SB2)

Staff

Past & Ongoing	1. Instructional Coaching Cohort (SB3) 2. Professional Learning training full and half-days (SB3) 3. Building Visitation days (SB2) 4. Leadership Team book studies (SB3) 5. Life Ready Graduate continued implementation (SB5) 6. Reflective Planning Teams (SB7) 7. Collaboratively design and implement a final school-day schedule (SB7)
Present	1. Providing leadership opportunities, direction, and support to teachers in the restructuring of the curriculum to include competencies and learning targets for all existing course content (SB3) 2. Implementing a restructured of the Guiding Coalition to more closely align with the specific instructional needs at the grade-band level (SB3) 3. Organizing an initial opportunity for High School teachers to support colleagues in lower grades by serving as "Super-Subs" during a week of virtual learning at the High School. Over 30 teachers and administrators participated, several for multiple days (SB3) 4. Creating opportunities for cross-district collaboration through the development of a three-district partnership for our February 12, 2021, Professional Learning Day (SB3) 5. Training on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for staff in order to recognize how our actions and the context of experiences can impact the results students produce (SB7) 6. Continue working with outside supports to help inform the next steps in our journey to clarify our Instructional Model, implement a Competency-Based curriculum, and work to personalize learning. (SB7)
Future	1. Provide more intensive and individual support on instructional practices for teachers at every experience level through a targeted and coherent Professional Learning Plan. (SB3) 2. Collaboratively Develop a Portrait of an Educator to highlight the traits of an effective EASD teacher in the 21st century. (SB3) 3. Work with instructional staff to refine our proficiency scale and apply it to evidence collected for each of the Life Ready Graduate profile traits so that we can provide real-time progress updates. (SB6)

Instructional Programs

Past & Ongoing	1. Refine the Life Ready Graduate profile and certificate process (SB5) 2. Personal Finance and Civics virtual mini-courses (SB1) 3. Increase Ephrata Middle School STEAM course options (SB4) 4. Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support (SB3) 5. Consistently apply the EASD Instructional Model (SB6)
Present	1. Restructuring the curriculum to include competencies and learning targets for all existing course content as well as the features of the LRG profile (SB5) 2. Finalizing Cornerstone projects at each grade-level that meet common District criteria and can serve as an application vehicle for required grade-level and course content knowledge (SB6) 3. Integration of the Sleep Study, survey, and presentations into the Healthy Living, Wellness & Self-Awareness trait of the Life Ready Graduate profile (SB1) 4. Create a data-dashboard to provide live access to student progress toward each feature of the Life Ready Graduate profile. (SB4) 5. Identify and organize instructional activities, feedback opportunities, and collected evidence for each grade-level and subject area/course for each of 12 Life Ready Graduate profile traits. (SB5)
Future	1. Continue exploration of additional STEAM and Computer Science programming for the elementary, intermediate, and middle levels based on student interest. (SB4) 2. Identify programs/resources/curriculum/partners to improve the equity and appropriate Social and Emotional Learning needs for all students within the District. (SB3) 3. Re-envision the instructional and curricular program at Ephrata High School to achieve the goal of having every student earn at least one college credit, industry credential, or work-ready certificate prior to graduation. (SB6)

Organizational Operations

Past & Ongoing	1. Improved the safety and security of all facilities (SB1) 2. Continuing to use the Virtual Substitute Teacher (SB3) 3. Leverage flexible furniture and collaboration spaces (SB2) 4. Critically examining foreseeable facility needs (SB1) 5. Ephrata Innovates (SB2) 6. Planning and implementing a late start-time schedule (SB1)
Present	1. Deploy remote learning technology, connectivity, and support to all students in order to provide a continuous learning path for students during an emergency closure and shift to online-learning. (SB4) 2. Collaboratively design and implement a flexible re-opening plan that prioritizes Safety, Engagement, and Choice for all students and their families for the 2020-2021 school year. (SB1) 3. Work with newly-identified architects to engage relevant stakeholders in the design work to meet the needs of the music program, EHS@Washington, Technology Services, Student Support Services, and the Board Room. (SB1) 4. Continue to strengthen safety procedures and facility needs and improve preparedness for unforeseen safety and security challenges. (SB1) 5. Work with our finance agency to structure constructions costs in a way that can work with our current and future annual budget needs, without causing any drastic change in operations or property tax rate. (SB1)
Future	1. Potentially expand the Virtual Substitute Teacher program so students could engage in non-time-sensitive course content for unplanned absences. (SB4) 2. Incorporate the "Accidental Improvements" identified and developed through the closure and modified re-opening of schools into post pandemic operations. (SB7) 3. Begin to research and consider options for the Washington Street property following relocation of those programs currently located at that location. (SB1)

Relationships

Past & Ongoing	1. Increased communication and transparency (SB2) 2. Collaborating with local districts and community partners (SB1) 3. Participating in Legislative events and visits (SB1) 4. Supporting other districts interested in Life Ready Graduate (SB1) 5. Served on the Mainspring of Ephrata Board (SB1) 6. Continuing to expand partnerships connected to the Ephrata High School internship program (SB6) 7. Ongoing communication with elected officials (SB1)
Present	1. Hosting collaboration events and site visits to share expertise and strengthen relationships with others interested in making similar progress across many areas (SB1) 2. Working closely with the Ephrata Area Education Foundation during the selection of and transition to a new Executive Director (SB1) 3. Regionalize the Life Ready Graduate Certificate for students and employers beyond EASD by serving on the Career Ready Lancaster Council with emphasis on Communication, Teamwork, Integrity, Problem-Solving, and Resilience. (SB5) 4. Continue to build the EASD brand by presenting at local, regional, and national educational events and sharing District success stories. (SB3)
Future	1. Formalize partnerships in support of Cornerstone projects at each grade-level K-8 so that students have a series of positive experiences with community organizations as they move through our system. (SB6) 2. Maintain a strong relationship with the teachers' association (EAEA) through transparent communication and shared problem-solving as we look toward the 2021-2022 school year and future contract negotiations. (SB2)

Additional Related and Supporting Materials

1. List of Memberships, Presentations, and Conversations

2. Recap of COVID-19 Pandemic Response Activities and Highlights

Memberships

- AASA – The School Superintendents Association
- AASA Digital Consortium
- AASA Governing Board
- Ag Occupational Advisory Committee
- Aurora Institute
- Career Ready Lancaster!
- Eastern PA Personalized Learning Network
- EdLeader21
- Ephrata Area Education Foundation
- Ephrata Cares
- Ephrata Rec Board
- ISTE – International Society for Technology in Education
- Lancaster County Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- LEARN – Leaders for Educational Accountability and Reform Network
- Mainspring of Ephrata – Visioning Committee
- MCCL Board of Directors
- MCL – Mass Customized Learning
- Northern Lancaster County Chamber of Commerce
- Northern Lancaster County HUB
- PASA – Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators
- PASA Board of Governors
- PASBO – Pennsylvania Association of School Business Officials
- PASCD – Pennsylvania Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
- Pennsylvania Department of Education Superintendent Academy

Presentations, Spotlights, and Ongoing Conversations

- EdLeader21 Webinar and Panel Discussion Webinar – "Recovery and Renewal Dialogue: Visionary Leadership"

- EdLeader21 National Event Session – *"When the Shift Hits the Fan: Using Professional Learning to Navigate Through a Pandemic"* & Portrait to Practice Fair

- PASA Presentation – *"Rigorous and Coherent Systems of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment"* to the New Superintendent Academy Cohort

- Leadership Lancaster 2020 Executive Class Workforce Partnerships Panelist

- Guest on the "District Leader Transforming Education" Podcast (https://www.districtleader.net/student-centered-learning-personalized-instruction-and-life-ready-competencies/)

- Life Changer of the Year Panel discussion on "Unlearning Leadership" https://nationallife.wistia.com/medias/c1ctllgzs1

- Mentor and presenter for six Superintendents through PASA and the PASA/AASA National Superintendent Certification Program

- Featured in an upcoming book, "Bold Leadership: Giving the Green Light for 21st Century Education" written by Ken Kay

- Featured in an upcoming book on "A School Leader's Guide to Navigating the Unknown: New Narratives Amid COVID-19" written by Dr. Sally Zepeda & Dr. Phil Lenoue

- Keynote for the upcoming National Conference on Digital Convergence (NCDC) on Equity, Personalization, and Digital Learning

- War Memorial Association (quarterly)

- Township and Borough Supervisors (3/annually)

COVID-19 Pandemic Response Activities and Highlights

As was indicated throughout the examination of the five Key Elements of the District, the COVID-19 pandemic caused significant disruptions to many of the projects and planned work to be accomplished. While disruptions and obstacles were encountered within each of the five Key Elements, there are also several success stories outlined through the body of this document that grew out of the District and EASD community as a whole. Finally, we look ahead into a post-pandemic world with new experiences and insights about how to best achieve our District Mission.

Highlights of EASD Response to COVID-19

Initial response to March 13, 2020, school closure

- o Triage for immediate needs

    - Students: Connections, Communication, and Care

    - Staff: Tools, Techniques, and Time

    - Families: Information, Connectivity, and Food

- o Technology Department Response

    - Mobilize devices to students

    - Remote tech support for families

    - Back-end support for staff

    - Virtual training for new tools

- o Food Services Response

    - Mobilized to-go meals operations (food, funding, personnel, and communications)

    - Developed systems for pre-ordering, volunteering, and safe pick-up

    - 235,000 meals provided to students at home since March 13, 2020

- o Administrative Response

    - Communication, Communication, Communication

    - Support student, staff, and family needs

    - Address logistical elements of the instructional program in online setting (expectations for staff and students, grading, credits, and GPA)

- Collaboratively planned for end of year rituals and rites of passage at all levels, but especially at the Ephrata High School for seniors

Re-Opening planning for the 2020-2021 school year

- Return to Sport Plan
  - Timelines for permissions from several governing bodies
  - Plans for notification and testing
  - Spectator rules, restrictions, and updates
- Commitment to Families
  - Healthy and safe for all
  - Engaging for students
  - Options and choice for families
- Instructional Modes
  - Modified Traditional
  - Online Learning
  - Blended Option
  - Ephrata Virtual Academy (EVA)
- Support for Staff
  - Training in June
  - Training and extra time in August
  - Other initiatives "On Hold" for the start of the year
  - Time throughout the first half of the year

Lessons Learned – Looking Ahead

- Importance of Relationships
- Advanced use of technology for independent learning
- Importance of Competencies, Learning Targets, and Authentic Assessments
- Value of the Life Ready Graduate traits in the real world