

# PROPELLING FORWARD

ANNUAL  
REPORT  
2021  
2022



**Bristol Township School District**

# TIGER STRONG

**EMPOWERED ENGAGED *INSPIRED***



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**Dear Bristol Township School District Community,**

As our community looks to the future, Bristol Township School District has many exciting initiatives ahead. From my new position as Superintendent to the Culture and Climate Committee kickoff and Benjamin Franklin Middle School opening, we are in an era of new beginnings. This is why our theme for the 2021-2022 annual report is "Propelling Forward." The following articles will walk you through how the District is moving forward and focused on the future.

After my appointment as Superintendent in July, I shared my Entry Plan to facilitate an effective transition on my official start date, November 21. I have been reviewing and evaluating District regulations, policies, and plans, but most importantly, working to build strong rapport and working relationships with the School Board of Directors, administrative team, teachers, community members, and stakeholders. It has been a pleasure meeting you all so far and learning about the culture of the school district, ongoing goals, and existing challenges.

In my first 30 days as Superintendent, I will focus on listening and learning. I'll hold "Meet the Superintendent" events, begin open office hours for parents and community members, and conduct listening tours at each school.

In my first 90 days, I will prioritize listening, synthesizing, and leading. Structured school visitations will allow me to visit each school for a morning, conference with the principal, visit classrooms, hold teacher focus groups, as well as student focus groups at the middle schools and high school. After meeting with each school, I will compile and analyze my findings to identify focus areas for the future.

Ultimately, I hope to propel Bristol Township School District forward to ensure all students are learning and achieving to their full potential. Thank you to our parents and guardians, faculty and staff, administrators, community members, and School Board for supporting this vision.

Sincerely,  
*Michael Nitti*

Michael Nitti  
Superintendent of Schools

# Threat Assessments Keep Schools Safe

Safe schools are essential for student learning and success. To keep students safe, Bristol Township School District has been performing threat assessments for many years now and recently started using the Comprehensive School Threat Assessment Guidelines (CSTAG), an evidence-based model for schools to use in conducting threat assessments. CSTAG has resolved thousands of threats without serious injury in schools throughout the U.S. and Canada, and the model has shown to reduce suspension and bullying.

Bristol Township School District began threat-assessment training in December 2021 and threat assessments using the CSTAG model were performed in February 2022. Staff members completed online classes with scenarios, followed by a test.

Threat assessment is a problem-solving approach to identify students and intervene to prevent violence. Prevention includes building a supportive and respectful school climate as well as helping students in distress before a problem or conflict escalates to violence.

"Threat assessment teams are a proactive approach to identify students facing difficulties," said David Jayne, Chief of School Police and Director of Security at BTSD. "The student is then provided with the appropriate supports to enable the student to continue their education without the need for exclusion or expulsion."

After a student is recognized as making a threat in the District, the threat is brought to the attention of building counselors and administrators. An investigation is initiated to find the facts, which involves the threat assessment team to further gather information for the assessment.

The CSTAG model provides the team with guidelines to distinguish whether a threat is transient (not serious) or substantive (poses a continuing risk to others). After this is determined, the team makes decisions for how to proceed, such as the level of counseling and support the student requires.

"The CSTAG model is a more flexible and efficient process that can quickly resolve threats that are not serious and concentrate efforts on the small number of serious threats," said Jayne.

In addition to threat assessment training, BTSD is always looking for new ways to ensure the safety and security of students, staff, and visitors. Recently, the District applied for a state grant that will be used to purchase items for school safety and for student development programs. ♦



# New Culture and Climate Committee Builds Belonging and Connection



Students perform at Opening Day for the 2022-2023 school year.

**Our Mission**  
*The mission of the Culture and Climate Committee is to build belonging, connect our staff, students, families, and community, and ensure everyone feels valued to achieve our goal of creating a culturally responsive environment.*

The Culture and Climate Committee is a newly formed committee in Bristol Township School District that builds belonging and connection while celebrating the people, places, and things in the District.

“As social workers, we were noticing a consistent decline in morale – both inside and outside of schools. There was a lack of feeling like people belong here among students, teachers, staff, and the community,” said Dr. Meredith Leach, School Social Worker at Franklin D. Roosevelt Middle School.

Leach and other staff members came up with the idea for the committee and invited School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (SWPBIS) leaders in each building to join due to their similar missions of establishing positive culture. The committee currently has about 20 members with at least one representative from each school, and any staff members who are interested can join.

“We wanted to create a cohesive mission where we focus on the strengths of Bristol Township School District,” said Joy Stickney-McDonald, School Social Worker at Mill Creek Elementary School.

During the Opening Day for the 2022-2023 school year, the Culture and Climate Committee wanted to create the feeling of happiness and motivate the staff for the rest of the school year.

Held in Harry S. Truman High School’s new auditorium, the day had a pep rally vibe featuring the Truman Tiger Band, Varsity Cheerleading Team, alumni and even a staff member DJing. They acknowledged staff members who have been in the District for many years, alumni that are now staff members, and welcomed new hires. Games and prizes for all staff helped build belonging and breakfast fueled their spirits.

The Culture and Climate Committee wants everyone in the District to feel valued, and that includes celebrating diversity and different cultures. Committee members are creating a calendar with all the holidays on it to make staff aware of what holidays students might be celebrating. The calendar also follows the SWPBIS calendar trait of the month. For example, October’s trait was “respect,” so schools highlighted that trait by sharing quotes and songs about respect during morning announcements. To build school spirit and morale, a Phillies Friday was also celebrated district-wide on October 14 where students and staff were encouraged to wear Phillies gear.

*cont’d on page 7*



# The Path to Success: Students Build Social-Emotional Learning Skills Across

Did you know Bristol Township students are using aspects of **social-emotional learning (SEL)** every day?

**SEL is the process of developing self-awareness, self-management, relationship building, responsible decision making, and other interpersonal skills that are vital for success.**

People with strong SEL skills are better equipped for challenges and benefit academically, professionally, and socially. This is why the District has been focusing on improving students' SEL skills by creating strong relationships with students, and using the School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (SWPBIS) program.

## Harry S. Truman High School

### SWPBIS

Harry S. Truman High School began training for SWPBIS in the 2021-2022 school year and rolled out the matrix and plan in the fall. On October 13, 2022, Truman held a SWPBIS kick-off day to teach students and staff expected behaviors with the Tiger STRONG (Safe, Trustworthy, Respectful, Organized iNspired, Gritty) matrix. During the kick-off, students traveled to different stations to learn how to be Tiger STRONG when it comes to classrooms, hallways, bathrooms, the cafeteria, school-wide events, and college and career readiness. Truman plans to start a student volunteer team and a community/parent team to help plan school events and rewards for SWPBIS.



Truman High School's SWPBIS team.

"Students were taught the expected behavioral expectations during kick-off and now we will reinforce that behavior and reward them for fulfilling expectations," said Dawn Martesi, Assistant Principal at Truman High School.

Students will earn Tiger Bucks for modeling Tiger STRONG behavior and can redeem them at the Tiger STRONG store. Additionally, all students filled out an SEL survey that the Truman administration will review to see where additional support may be needed to fulfill Tiger STRONG behavior.

### WHAT IS SWPBIS?

*The School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (SWPBIS) program is a universal, school-wide program that aims to establish a social culture where students expect and support appropriate behavior from one another.*

### School Social Worker Julie Laquer

Truman's School Social Worker Julie Laquer primarily works with students with the greatest socio-emotional needs. She provides counseling to all special education students with "Social Work or Counseling as a Related Service" in their IEP and others as needed, and collaborates on behavior/attendance teams, liaises between Truman, families and community providers, and conducts risk/threat assessments along with Truman's counselors.



Think Tank Innovators with Professional Learning Partnerships helped the District revamp Freshman Orientation, which focused on cultivating a more welcoming experience for ninth grade students.

### SEL Coordinator Cade Feeney

In the 2021-2022 school year, Truman brought on Cade Feeney to fill a new role as SEL Coordinator. When teachers feel there is something off or not quite right with students, they refer them to see Feeney to discuss reasons why students may be skipping a certain class or struggling with a grade. Feeney also works to take a proactive approach to see where students are at and what needs they have even if it appears nothing is wrong.

Feeney is readily accessible to students daily and can handle conflicts that need to be addressed immediately by meeting with students one-on-one or in small group sessions. Before starting this role, Feeney worked with a community organization that regularly visited District schools, so many Truman students have known him since elementary school.

"Students know they can open up to me and that they will be heard, feel seen, and know that they matter," said Feeney. "There is no other place I would rather be for this job. Truman students are the most resilient, kind, and giving, but also the most unaccepted. Whether it be socio-economic reasons or other challenges, they know they have to work above and beyond students in other Districts and with far less resources and supports."

### The Peace Center

Another resource to help with conflict resolution is working with The Peace Center and its Director of Community Programming Gayle Evans. As an alternative to disciplining students with in-school suspensions that further impede learning, these students are now meeting three to four hours a week with The Peace Center, an organization that promotes peaceful resolution of conflict. Evans meets with groups of students to help with conflict resolution, character building, decision-making, and other key SEL skills.

### Pathfinder Program

To build positive relationships with parents and students, two Bucks County Sheriffs visit Truman twice a week to mentor students. This is made possible through the Pathfinder Program, which aims to connect deputies with the public. The sheriffs use empathy, compassion, and active listening as they mentor and visit with students.



Armstrong students learn the ROCKS matrix of behavioral expectations.

### Professional Learning Partnerships

Teachers and administrators from Truman are in their second year of the Think Tank Innovators program to boost community and motivation among ninth grade students. Led by Chief Learning Officer and Founder Julia Skolnik of Professional Learning Partnerships, Think Tanks bring together solution-minded teachers who work together to improve general needs of students.

Think Tanks are held four times a year, and teachers and administrators work on projects between those meetings. Because ninth grade is a difficult transition year for students, projects have been focusing on three core needs: social emotional learning and motivation, setting clear expectations, and building a sense of community. For the 2022-2023 school year, Truman is continuing to work on those needs and identifying new student needs to address.

"There is a lot of overlap between SWPBIS and the work we are doing in the Think Tank," said Skolnik, who is excited to expand the collaboration between Professional Learning Partnerships and Bristol Township School District. "There will be more opportunities to engage with students, teachers and the community this year."

## Franklin D. Roosevelt & Neil A. Armstrong Middle Schools

### SWPBIS

The teaching and learning at Neil A. Armstrong Middle School and Franklin D. Roosevelt Middle School are centered on the whole student. Social-emotional skills are taught beginning on the very first day of school to all students and staff using the expectations outlined by each school's SWPBIS matrix. Systematic and evidence based, SWPBIS provides students with a predictable and consistent environment that is positive, safe, and equitable.

Armstrong uses the ROCKS model for SWPBIS while FDR uses the CARES matrix. Armstrong's behavior expectations for ROCKS (Respectful, Organized, Cooperative, Kind, Safe) are taught in all of Armstrong's common areas including the hallway, cafeteria, bus, gymnasium, and digital citizenship or online. Similarly, students at FDR Middle School learn expected behavior through the CARES (Cooperative, Accountable, Respectful, Empathetic, Safe) Pledge.

Each school's respective SWPBIS matrix has also grown into its own "brand" or trademark to promote school pride and a positive climate. In both programs, students earn tickets for exemplifying school-wide behavior expectations and trade them in for prizes. ROCKS and CARES are also used to recognize students and staff with celebrations and events.

### Counselors & Social Work Staff

Both middle schools have two guidance counselors and a full-time District social worker who support students and families. The District recently partnered with Lakeside Mental Health to bring extra counselors into all schools to provide essential support to students with behavioral health or special education needs.

*Armstrong earned the highest recognition from the state for state recognition for the success of their SWPBIS program in the 2019-2020 school year for Tiers 1, 2, and 3. Additionally, in 2017 Armstrong was recognized for Tier 2 and in 2014 for Tier 1. Tier 1 is the school-wide program, Tier 2 is for smaller groups of students who need additional support, and Tier 3 provides more intensive interventions.*

## Pennsylvania Student Assistance Program (SAP)

Armstrong and FDR are both part of the Pennsylvania Student Assistance Program (SAP) – a systematic team process used to mobilize school resources to remove barriers to learning. It is designed to assist in identifying issues including alcohol, tobacco, other drugs, and mental health issues, which pose a barrier to a student's success.

## Pathfinder Program

Like Truman, the middle schools also receive mentoring through the Pathfinder Program. It provides students with the opportunity to connect with mentors through the Bucks County Sheriff's Office. Students meet and build relationships with local law enforcement personnel both in school and outside of the school day through discussion groups and social activities.

## The Tariq Khamisa Foundation (TKF)

Partnering with the Tariq Khamisa Foundation (TKF) since 2019, TKF teaches students how to be peacemakers and use a peaceful approach to problem-solving, reconciliation, conflict management, and relationship building that ensures safety and dignity for everyone. TKF is co-facilitated by the middle school guidance and social work staff along with all 6th grade social studies teachers.

## Responsive Classroom

All district faculty and staff are committed to designing and facilitating curriculum and instruction that fosters the development of students' social and emotional skills. Middle school staff recently completed a series of professional development sessions for Responsive Classroom, another student-centered, social and emotional learning approach to teaching and discipline. Responsive Classroom focuses on engaging academics, positive community, effective management, and developmental awareness. In a Responsive Classroom, communication and relationships are key. Students are given the strategies they need to engage in academic discussion and use problem solving skills while collaborating with other classmates

# Brookwood, Keystone & Mill Creek Elementary Schools

## SWPBIS

To create a positive school culture where students expect and support appropriate behavior from one another, Brookwood, Keystone, and Mill Creek Elementary Schools follow the Bristol Township Elementary School Code of Conduct. Students pledge, "I am respectful. I am responsible. I am safe. I am prepared." Positive behaviors that follow the pledge are expected in all areas inside and outside the school. For example, in the classroom, students can follow the Code of Conduct by using an appropriate voice (respectful), participating and completing work (responsible), keeping their bodies to themselves (safe), and being ready to learn (prepared).

Students earn tickets for demonstrating the expected behaviors in the Code of Conduct and can redeem the tickets for rewards. Additionally, the schools hold themed Spirit Days throughout the year to establish community and connection.

## Zones of Regulation

The Zones of Regulation curriculum is one example of creating positive culture and climate in the District's elementary schools. The zones teach students self-regulation, or the ability to achieve the preferred state of alertness for the given situation. Each of the four zones: blue, green, yellow, and red, represent a state of alertness of both the body and emotions.

**BLUE ZONE** A low state of alertness; feeling sad, tired, sick, or bored.

**GREEN ZONE** The ideal state of alertness; feeling calm, happy, focused, or content.

**YELLOW ZONE** A heightened state of alertness; feeling stress, anxiety, excitement, or silliness.

**RED ZONE** An extremely heightened state of alertness; feeling anger, rage, explosive behavior, panic, or grief.

All zones are natural to experience and there are no "bad" zones. The framework provides students with consistent, common language to understand their feelings and level of alertness. Additionally, it teaches students how to recognize and manage their Zone based on the environment around them. For example, when students are playing at recess, they may be in the Yellow Zone, feeling excitement and silliness. However, when students transition to the quiet environment of the library, students may still be in the Yellow Zone, but will have to manage their emotions differently to meet behavioral expectations. ♦

**Keystone and Brookwood Elementary Schools earned statewide recognition for the success of implementing Tier 1 of SWPBIS at Keystone, and Tiers 1 and 2 at Brookwood, for the 2019-2020 school year.**



Elementary students match behaviors and emotions with the Zones of Regulation.

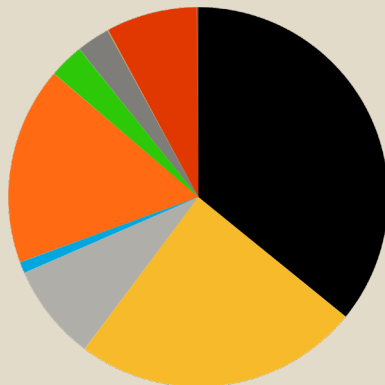
# Understanding The 2022-2023 Budget

When balancing the budget, Bristol Township School District strives to meet the needs of students and staff while being careful stewards of the community's tax dollars.

For the fourth year in a row, the District was able to create its budget with no increases in real estate taxes. Additionally, expenditures were budgeted conservatively where appropriate. The increases to expenditures in 2022-2023 are largely due to significant enrollment and tuition costs for charter schools as well as financing Benjamin Franklin Middle School.

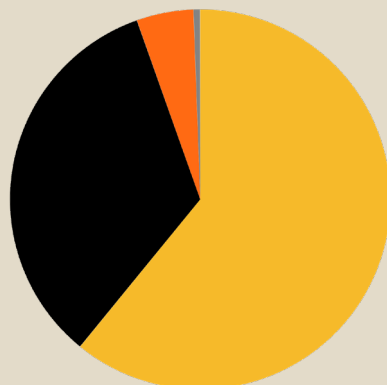
The Elementary and Secondary Schools Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds provided by the U.S. Department of Education are being used to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 in the District. ESSER II and III funds are allocated for professional development, curriculum alignment, learning platforms, mental health supports, and more. ♦

## How Tax Dollars are Spent - Total Expenditure: \$154,037,027



- Salaries: \$55,255,806 - 35.9%
- Employee Benefits: \$37,519,072 - 24.4%
- Professional Services: \$12,673,971 - 8.2%
- Purchased Property Services: \$1,473,874 - 1.0%
- Other Contracted Services: \$25,975,701 - 16.9%
- Books and Supplies: \$4,548,206 - 3.0%
- Equipment: \$4,361,371 - 2.8%
- Other Objects: \$100,330 - 0.1%
- Debt Service: \$11,978,696 - 7.8%
- Budgetary Reserve: \$150,000 - 0.1%

## Where Tax Dollars Come From - Total Revenue: \$154,037,027



- Local Revenues: \$93,792,629 - 60.9%
- State Revenues: \$51,927,702 - 33.7%
- Federal Revenues: \$7,448,288 - 4.8%  
\* Includes ESSER Funds
- Fund Balance: \$868,408 - 0.6%

Continued from page 3

Ultimately, the Culture and Climate Committee is a way to combine many positive initiatives in the schools: Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), SWPBIS, responsive classroom, restorative practices, and social emotional learning (SEL).

"The initiatives seemed to be operating solo, and they are really all connected," said Regina Mazzocchi, special education and eighth grade ELA teacher at Neil A. Armstrong Middle School.

The committee aims to create a cohesive K-12 experience by integrating all these initiatives, which are tied back to creating culture and improving climate.

"It's about aligning efforts together as a District and improving Bristol Township internally and externally," said Leach.

The committee hopes students, staff, alumni, parents, and the community are proud members of Bristol Township School District, and would love for them to get involved and share new ideas.

"Parents are such an important part of the school community," said Mazzocchi. "We want to bring back that family involvement in schools that was here before COVID."

Representatives from Bristol Cares have attended Culture and Climate meetings to bring information to the committee and in turn, bring committee information to the community.

To involve students, the Culture and Climate Committee held a logo contest for Truman students. The winning logo was created by senior Jason O'Neill and the design features two hands holding up and supporting the District's Tiger logo. The words "Culture & Climate" represent the committee name and "Empowered, Engaged, Inspired" is another nod to the District's branding. The Culture and Climate logo will be used to help identify the committee throughout the District, raise awareness, and be featured on Culture and Climate Committee communication moving forward.

While the committee is in its infancy, the members acknowledge it's a work in progress and are aligned in their goals.

"We are like-minded people who care. We want what's best for Bristol Township," said Leach. ♦



To build belonging and connection, elementary students celebrated gratitude, the SWPBIS trait of the month, for November.



Bristol Township School District  
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# CONGRATULATIONS TO THE CLASS OF 2022!



**Number of graduates: 405**

**Scholarship dollars provided to graduates: 3.5 million**

## The Class of 2022 is represented at the following colleges and universities:

Alvernia University, Arcadia University, Arizona State University, Bucks County Community College, Cabrini University, DeSales University, Drexel University, Elizabethtown College, Georgia State University, Hofstra University, Holy Family University, Indiana University of PA, Kutztown University, Millersville University, Misericordia University, Moore College of Art and Design, New York Conservatory of the Dramatic Arts, Northampton Community College, Ohio University, Penn State University, Rutgers University, Temple University, Texas Tech University, Thomas Jefferson University, Towson University, University of the Sciences, Villanova University, Washington and Jefferson College, West Chester University, and more.

## Post high school plans:

- 28.4% enrolled in a four-year college or university
- 34.6% enrolled in 2-year college
- 25.2% entered the workforce
- 1.6% entered the military
- 4.8% enrolled in a technical school
- 5.4% are special education students who graduated and returned for post-grad

## The Class of 2022 is represented at the following technical schools:

Automotive Training Center, Aviation Maintenance Institute of PA, Pennco Tech, Universal Training Institute, and Williamson College of the Trades.

The Class of 2022 is represented by students entering the following unions: IBEW Local 98