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Community  
UPDATE

## Our New Vision for Our Schools – COME GROW WITH US

### Casting a New Vision for Our Schools 2017–2022

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For almost two years, administrators, teachers, and staff collaborated to cast a new vision for the district. A vision that shifts from a traditional public school mindset, towards a learner-focused environment that strives to educate every child, to a very high level, in every classroom, every day.

For the past 18 months, the district faculty and administration utilized the collective input from multiple planning committees to answer three simple but direct questions: (1) Where are we today? (2) What type of a school do we want to become? (3) How do we get there? These questions provided a guide for each committee to review specific student data and to review relevant national and international research on a wide range of topics. Over seventy percent of the faculty volunteered to be part of the planning process. Whether motivated by frustration or enthusiasm, their goal was the same: how do we make our schools better and keep moving them forward every day?

The planning process was both inspiring and humbling. The teachers and administrators spoke with passion about what we needed to be doing every day with every child. They spoke with equal clarity around frustration created by high stakes tests that drove a rapidly-paced curriculum focused on what the state said was important, not based on the individual needs of students that the teachers saw in front of them.

To be perfectly clear, schools exist to meet the needs of the child in the community for their future, not to raise test scores on standards deemed appropriate at a national level for every child. Children are different. The life experiences they bring to school are different. Their pathway of learning should be personal. Our teachers need the agency to make rigorous and relevant instructional decisions for individual children based on need, and not fear a reprimand for taking a learning risk. The new strategic plan seeks to encourage and support that type of a learning environment where the learning needs of the child are first, and we pursue them boldly.

The slogan fire & I.C.E. was the focus on every conversation surrounding the development of this new vision for our schools. Fire and I.C.E. represented the passion of teachers and the things inside the school they could control. Fire is the reason every teacher entered this profession; to teach, not to raise test scores. The acronym, I.C.E. represented what we can control inside our schools every day: how we teach (Instruction), what we teach (Curriculum) and how students interact with the learning task (Engagement).

Individuals from all backgrounds in the district came together to create a plan that will spark a passion for learning in students as well as their teachers.

After working through a mountain of comments and criticisms, a new vision for the district emerged in two main areas: one for students in kindergarten to sixth grade and one for students in fifth through twelfth grade. The two plans recognize the different educational goals of early childhood education where foundation skills are mastered, and secondary education where increasing focus on career and college planning emerges.

The plan for the Central and Rommelt elementary students is a learner-focused approach in order to build a solid academic and behavioral foundation.

At the high school and Rommelt, there is a focus on innovative learning, community, college, and career initiatives to help students prepare for whatever path they choose after high school.

This is an exciting time to be working in education; in general, and particularly here at South. These buildings are staffed with bright and dedicated staff who care deeply about children. We are a public school that exists to serve the educational needs of this community. We take that mission seriously, and we will keep looking and keep learning to meet those needs every day for every child.



The details of that vision, on the following pages, seek to illustrate what we envision, and inspire teachers, students, and families to grow with us. Both the elementary and the secondary plan is divided into seven areas addressing academics, agency, and growth for teachers and students alike. Each section begins with a big idea, follows with probing questions, and outlines what needs to occur next. For clarity and accountability, benchmarks are included from 2017 through 2022. Innovative learning is provided as an example (pg. 6).

Through this plan, our goal is to create a dynamic learning environment that excites students and engages them in learning that is both rigorous and relevant to their future. Learning that recognizes that persistence through failure is itself a learning opportunity. This vision is not dismissive of indicators of achievement, but an affirmation that learning is personal to the needs of each child and situationally dynamic. Let us keep looking and keep learning every day for the best way and the best resources to teach and learn. *We invite you to come grow with us.*

*Mark Stamm*  
Mark Stamm, D.Ed.  
Superintendent of Schools

**MILL**  
*Open House*

Explore the new

Mountie  
Innovative  
Learning  
Lab

**Monday, Nov. 20th**  
6:00 - 7:00 p.m.

Rommelt Elementary School



## STRATEGIC PLAN CONCEPT MAP Kindergarten – Grade 6

### VISION

Educate every child, to a very high level,  
in every classroom, every day.

### CORE BELIEFS

Learner-focused instruction towards a deep understanding of essential skills, is more important than quantity, breadth, and pace.

State and national assessments are important indicators of progress toward external standards, but increasing scores or maintaining pace with a core curriculum does not supersede professional judgement to teach the immediate needs of the student.

Professional, grade-level teams with sufficient time and robust resources, are best situated to make informed decisions on the educational needs of students.

Meaningful connections between school, students, and families are created through a caring and transparent environment with active sharing of information about learning and behavior.

#### Learner Focused

Every child has a right to learn. Every child brings special circumstances to their learning. Every classroom must support the individual learning needs of every child, every day, with a focus on the development of the learner not the pace of the curriculum.

#### Assessment for Action

Assessments inform the learning progress. Assessments should never dominate the classroom routine or unnecessarily consume valuable instructional time.

#### Effective Elementary Teams

Visionary leadership empowering capable and effective teams to inspire and support great teaching and deep learning.

#### Professional Autonomy

Affirmation of professional judgement to make instructional decisions that support the individual learning needs of students.

#### Targeted Training

Professional training must focus on what the teacher needs to fuel their passion, to expand their knowledge, to excite students about learning.

#### School-Wide Positive Behavior

##### *Intervention and Supports*

School-wide program of positive behavior supports built on the PBIS framework of clarity, consistency, and program fidelity.

#### Building Relationships

Every child needs to feel appreciated, valued and safe. Schools are ideally situated to form deep relationships with students and their families.

*Let's create a total school climate that excites children about learning using uniform supports for appropriate learning and behavior for each student.*

## LEGOS AND SPHEROS



Innovative learning will take a multitude of forms as teachers begin to create more unique opportunities for their students.

Two teachers have already been thinking about innovative learning and have worked to implement new technology into their everyday lessons.

Both Keith Cremer, eighth grade science teacher, and Lisa Laidacker, elementary instructional technology teacher, received Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) grants to bring unique learning opportunities to students. The grants were awarded through the South Williamsport Education Foundation.

Cremer received six kits of Lego Mindstorms which are robots students can build, program and control.

Currently in his class, students have assembled their robots and are learning how to individually program them to create customized movements. This is a hands-on way for them to learn basic coding skills which they will build upon as they grow academically.

“Lego Mindstorms is a student-centered and student-driven project,” he said. “They decide what they want the robot to look like, what they want it to do and program it to accomplish that goal.”

Laidacker received 12 Spheros which are robotic balls that can be programmed by the user through apps on an iPad. Students create the code to give the round robots direction. The Spheros expand her existing coding program using Codeapillars which is currently taught at Central.

Her students are learning basic coding in class and will start working with the Spheros once they have a better understanding of coding.

There will be more about Laidacker’s class to look forward to in the near future as she continues to bring new and innovative instructional ideas to students. Rumor has it she’s been talking with the Superintendent about a Makerspace.

## MOUNTIE ONLINE LEARNING ACADEMY AND DUAL ENROLLMENT

Providing multiple options for students to gain experiences beyond the classroom opens up doors to learning that were not possible before. The district will open its own cyber academy, make available blended learning opportunities and dual enrollment through the Pennsylvania College of Technology.

The cost to the district for cyber charter schools is now close to \$500,000 annually. To bring those students back to the district, the district is offering its own cyber academy in January for all South Williamsport students.

Dwight Woodley, Innovative Learning Director, is spearheading the creation of the program.

Students who are enrolled as cyber students will receive a South Williamsport diploma just like every other South student. They already have access to be a part of clubs and sports teams.

Within the schools, online classes will be available for students as a blended learning option.

“Providing online courses for all students to access is a great way to open up additional academic options,” Woodley said. “Students will get the chance to take classes that we cannot provide due to a limited number of teachers.”

There will be many AP courses available that are not already offered in the regular curriculum.

Dual enrollment has already been happening with the Williamsport Area High School’s Career and Technical Education (CTE). At the Williamsport High School, they have a wide variety of programs in their CTE program ranging from construction and welding to computer science and culinary.

Students who take part in the CTE program can learn tangible skills they can take to directly join the workforce after high school or pursue higher education.

Another option is the Penn College NOW program that will be available for high school students to gain college credits. This program will be available to South students for the start of the 2018-19 school year.

Having this program gives students who are interested in attending college the chance to see what a college class is like and get credits for when they go to a university after graduation.

The program will begin next school year.



## STRATEGIC PLAN CONCEPT MAP *Grades 5 - 12*

### VISION

Educate every child, to a very high level,  
in every classroom, every day.

### CORE BELIEFS

Deep understanding and critical thinking are skills developed through deliberately planned instruction around innovative, learner-focused tasks.

State and national assessments are important indicators of progress toward external standards, but increasing scores or maintaining pace with a core curriculum does not supersede professional judgement to teach the immediate needs of the student.

Purpose-driven teams can leverage meaningful changes in how students learn in a culture of innovation where risk is supported and encouraged.

Meaningful connections between school, students, and families are created through a caring and transparent environment where active sharing of information is encouraged.

#### Innovative Learning

Through purpose-driven teams, develop transformative thinking about the structure and processes of the school to support innovative learning everywhere and all the time.

#### Highest Quality Instruction

More than any other factor inside the control of the school, the quality of instruction will determine how much students learn and their long-term commitment to learning.

#### Assessment for Action

Routine assessments to collect actionable data on student learning that informs lesson design and promotes student agency in their education.

#### Encourage Risk

Create a professional environment where instructional risks on novel ideas are encouraged and supported.

#### Learning Amplifiers

Incorporation of robust tools and modern technology as a learning amplifier to enhance face-to-face learning, creativity, and productivity.

#### C3 - Community, College, and Career

Age-appropriate skills in critical thinking, community contribution, collaboration, information literacy, and creativity are essential for college and career trajectories.

#### Relationships

Every child needs to feel appreciated, valued and safe. Schools are ideally situated to form deep relationships with students and their families.

*Let's create a total school climate that engages students in innovative learning inside a rigorous and relevant C3 curriculum.*





# Mountie Innovative Learning Lab



The concept of innovative learning comes to life in the Learning Lab at Rommelt Elementary School.

To experiment with collaborative and individual-focused learning programs, the strategic planning team created a modern educational space to encourage learning risk, to promote collaboration and to incorporate real-world application across disciplines. This new space is dubbed the “Mountie Innovative Learning Lab” and follows a growing national trend of flexible learning environments that seek to leverage collaboration and various learning resources such as abundant white boards and personal technology like iPads.

What will undoubtedly be the first of these types of spaces, the Rommelt conference room transformed over the summer to a place where students of all ages can work together in one of the six small group learning zones. There are multiple dry-erase white boards, two Apple TVs, several high-top tables, 30 iPads and various other learning zones designed to promote the active sharing of ideas between students through collaboration and mobility.

Teachers have jumped at the chance to utilize the lab with students. Fifth grade teacher Ashley Zielewicz has seen her students flourish in the new space. She said they are more engaged and work more efficiently compared to them sitting behind desks while she lectures.

“Students are put in charge of their learning when they are in the lab,” Zielewicz said. “The lab encourages the kids to explore on their own to find solutions to problems. They ask one another questions and use online resources to become experts on the topic we are learning that day.”

Students can work together on a presentation while displaying their work onto one of the TVs for everyone to collaborate. Teachers and staff can use the more intimate spaces with whiteboards to do remedial work with an individual or small group. Already the MILL has demonstrated its ability to support individual learning when needed.





## INNOVATIVE LEARNING

*Learner before Task. Task before Teaching.*

Modern tools enable and modern work environments demand learner-focused schools that encourage risk, promote collaboration, support open access to information, and incorporate real world application across disciplines.

### WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Our current schools were designed for a different era where teachers and textbooks were the center of instruction. This model fit at the time, but the availability of modern learning tools, open access to information, and a continually evolving awareness of how learning occurs, provides opportunities to reconsider learning spaces and our approach to teaching. Innovation is not a district initiative. Innovation seeks better solutions to meet changing needs and new demands. Innovative learning places the student as learner first, the task second, and lesson design last.

### NEXT STEPS

- Utilize a new leadership position, Director of Innovative Learning, to build teacher and school capacity to understand learner needs and how to design appropriate tasks using different kinds of tools, in different kinds of spaces, to meet those needs.
- Create a purpose-driven team of teachers, students, and parents that utilize transformative thinking about the structure and purpose of school-to-support innovative learning everywhere all the time.
- Expand district capacity to meet the needs of students through partnerships with Dual Enrollment, Blended Learning, and Schools-to-Work experiences.
- Utilize modern tools and innovative low-tech spaces, to enhance the learning atmosphere for students.

### KEY QUESTIONS

How will we utilize a committee of stakeholders to support and guide innovation?

How will we educate teachers and students about modern learners, modern technologies, and modern work environments?

How do we keep learners at the center of our conversations?

### GROWTH GOAL: 2021 - 22

Innovation seeks better solutions to meet changing needs and new demands. Innovative learning places the student as learner first, the task second, and lesson design last.

For students and their future, a district wide culture of constantly evaluating current conditions against future needs.

Schools will emphasize academic rigor, situational relevance, and learning everywhere all the time.

### GROWTH GOAL: 2018 - 2021

Create purpose driven teams of teachers, parents, and students that use transformative thinking about the structure and purpose of school to support innovative learning everywhere all the time.

3-5 purpose-driven teams that focus on leading innovative change for core organizational needs.

Expand program options to include Dual Enrollment, Blended Learning, and School-to-Work.

### GROWTH GOAL: 2017-2020

Director of Innovative Learning will build school capacity to understand learner specific needs and design appropriate tasks using different tools in different spaces to meet those needs.

50% faculty participation in 3-5 topic-specific discussion each month on personalized learning, innovative instructional ideas, and other topics as emerge.

Utilization of the Innovative Learning Lab by Rommelt and High School teachers to explore social learning opportunities with low-tech and high-tech resources.

Expansion of Innovative Learning spaces in the JR / SR High school to promote learning everywhere and learning all the time.

From the desk of...

**Dwight Woodley, Director of Innovative Learning**



The Director of Innovative Learning is a new position that plays an essential role in executing the strategic plan to maximize learning and enhance instruction.

Dwight Woodley, former Rommelt Elementary School principal, enthusiastically assumed this new role in July. He is laser focused on directing the South Williamsport Area School District into a learning environment that encourages its students, teachers and staff to think big and bold about what is possible. He is putting the wheels in motion to support innovative learning, encourage risk and leverage all available resources to amplify learning.

Mr. Woodley's passion for teaching, a background in instructional technology and commitment to the community and its schools, made him the perfect person to launch the new position. He is a part of the cultural mindset shift to move on from a standardized test focus to an individual learner focus to excite every student about learning.

"My position is to change the environment of how we teach students," he said. "We want kids to start creative learning and stop memorizing information for an exam."

To make this shift, teachers must embrace the strategic vision of the school to seek innovative learning opportunities, encourage risk as a learning option and leverage available resources to amplify learning for every student every day.

The Director of Innovative Learning role will continue to grow exponentially over the coming year, Woodley said. As the strategic plan progresses, he will guide some of its major parts such as providing opportunities for blended learning and training teachers on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) activities for students.

He will work on adding new Innovative Learning areas at Central Elementary School and the South Williamsport Jr./Sr. High School, develop a cyber academy and bring back the Penn College Now program for 2018-19 school year. Our goal is to take learning beyond the classroom to learning everywhere and all the time.

The tasks Woodley will accomplish over the next year are only scratching the surface of what can be accomplished in this new position.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Innovation isn't just for students, it's for teachers and district leaders as well. Creating innovative professional development opportunities for staff is essential to keep the passion for education ablaze.

As the Director of Innovative Learning, Dwight Woodley's diving into new areas to expand and enrich the skill sets of staff. These opportunities combine both the best of virtual and face-to-face training. In every program we develop to train staff, we seek to model the types of innovative instruction we are trying to create for students.

For example, this year there are three major staff development programs currently underway:

The first began early this summer with the science department who requested Interactive White Boards for their classrooms. Working with the Department Chair, Matt Eisely, and his flipped-learning ideas, Mr. Woodley constructed the program that used the interactive board and flipped-learning to introduce multiple types of non-traditional instruction throughout the science program.

A second program is micro badging. Micro badges are certificates of completion for short web-based programs. The micro programs are assembled by the teacher into a personalized program that meets their individual needs. Currently micro courses are available through Microsoft and Apple, others are in the works.

Finally, is a face-to-face book study. Over a dozen teachers volunteered to participate in a multi-session exploration of the book, "The Innovators Mindset." Mr. Woodley sees the book study as a chance to have a sustained and in-depth professional debate about how to leverage meaningful and recognizable changes to the learning environment.

Innovative professional development is not new to the district, said district superintendent, Dr. Mark Stamm. "Since the first interactive boards were introduced at Central Elementary almost a decade ago, we have committed to building sustainable programs of cohort teachers that produced tangible benefits for teachers and students".

"Being willing to change these programs as we learned more, has been one of our greatest strengths," he said. The new position of Innovative Learning will further expand this model to the benefit of students and staff.

## Like us on Facebook

Stay up-to-date with events and activities around the school and community by following the district Facebook page. With almost daily

updates on student activities, awards, achievements, and special events, this is a perfect one-stop location to stay connected with your community schools. [facebook.com/SWMounties](https://facebook.com/SWMounties)





\*\*\*\*\*ECRWSS\*\*\*\*\*

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**South Williamsport, PA 17702**

## SUPPORTING CHANGE, A TEAM APPROACH

Over the past eighteen months, numerous faculty and staff were directly involved with the development of this new strategic plan. The current core advisory team directly supports the superintendent and the district leadership team to ensure we remain focused on our vision and our core values.

### LEADERSHIP TEAM

**Mark Stamm** – *Superintendent*

**Dwight Woodley** – *Director of Innovative Learning /  
Information Systems*

**Jesse Smith** – *High School Principal*

**Michele Loomis** – *High School Assistant Principal*

**Matt Fisher** – *Rommelt Elementary Principal /  
Director of Student Services*

**Kathy Furman** – *Central Elementary Principal*

**Kristin Bastian** – *Director of Special Education /  
School Psychologist*

### FACULTY REPRESENTATIVES

**Ashley Zielewicz** – *ELA Writing Grade 5*

**Tara McGlensey** – *ELA Writing Grade 6*

**Keith Cremer** – *Science Grade 7*

**Emily Wagner** – *High School Counselor*

### DEPARTMENT CHAIRS

**Matt Eisley** – *Science*

**Jamie Bloom** – *Mathematics*

**Rich Zalonis** – *Social Studies*

**John Hitesman** – *English /*

*Language Arts*

**Sandy Hess** – *Fine Arts /  
Physical Education*

**Jen Kimball** – *Electives*

### FUTURE MEMBERS –

*Beginning Winter 2018*

### Student Representatives

*(Rommelt 2 / JR 2 / HS 2)*

### Parent Representatives

### Board Representatives

## — DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION —

### ADMINISTRATIVE/BUSINESS OFFICE

515 W. Central Ave. • South Williamsport, PA 17702

Telephone: 570-327-1581 • Fax: 570-326-0641

**Mark Stamm**, *Superintendent*

**Dennis A. Artley**, *Business Manager*

### CENTRAL ELEMENTARY

**Grades K - 4**

555 W. Mountain Ave. • South Williamsport, PA 17702

Telephone: 570-323-3694 • Fax: 570-320-4492

**Kathy A. Furman**, *Principal*

### ROMMELT ELEMENTARY

**Grades 5 & 6**

515 W. Central Ave. • South Williamsport, PA 17702

Telephone: 570-320-4470 • Fax: 570-567-0807

**Matt Fisher**, *Principal*

### JR./SR. HIGH SCHOOL

**Grades 7 - 12**

700 Percy St. • South Williamsport, PA 17702

Telephone: 570-326-2684 • Fax: 570-326-2687

**Jesse Smith**, *Principal*

**Michelle Loomis**, *Assistant Principal*

**Scott Hill**, *Athletic Director:*

570-320-4449 [swasports.org](http://swasports.org)

**Guidance Office:** 570-320-4445