



Delta Program Committee Update:

Exploring Delta as a School

March 2024

Purpose for Committee

To discuss with students, faculty, parents, and other stakeholders the possible implications of transitioning the Delta Program to a school.

Committee Members - 17 Members

Korben Truitt, Delta MS Student Sacha Buckland, HS Delta Student Zofia Sullivan, Delta HS Student Andrea Larson, MS & HS School Counselor Diane Reed, MS & HS Teacher Paul McCormick, MS Teacher Jon Downs, Delta Director Brett Wilson, Associate Principal Tina Chambers Greene, Assistant Principal Jonathan Bucher, Assist. Superintendent	Sara LaJeunesse, MS Parent Linnet Brooks, HS Parent Heather Winfield, MS/HS Parent Karen Truitt, MS Parent Peter Buck, Board Member and HS Parent Amy Bader, Board Member and HS Parent Gretchen Brandt, Board Member & MS Parent
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Committee Meetings Held:

- September 13
- October 11
- November 16
- December 13

- January 4
- January 12
- February 5
- February 14
- February 15
- February 22
- April 5
- April 12
- April 23

Sub-committee meetings held: January 9 and February 28

Delta as a School

What is the end goal, and what could be gained from this?

Our goal is to continuously improve as a district while providing equitable opportunities to all students. Separating Delta students from Park Forest, Mount Nittany, and State High would cement Delta's identity and provide the district with clearly defined and comparable schools. This would strengthen Delta and the other schools by giving us more accurate data to help school leaders and teachers make better programming decisions, apply more resources effectively, and provide the best outcomes for their students.

Additionally, a school status would dramatically increase Delta's visibility to new families, assisting them with making informed decisions about school options for their children. This would be a more equitable and transparent approach, as Delta would be listed side by side with all schools.

Is it more sustainable in the long term for Delta to be a program or a school?

In the long term, it could be more sustainable to be a school since a program could be ended much more easily than closing a school. Article VII, 24 PS § 7-780 22 of the Pa. Code outlines the process to close a school, which requires a public hearing with the school board prior to any school closing. There is no such requirement for a program.

Process

What does the decision-making process look like at each level?

1. The committee shares questions, collects information, studies and reviews information and data, and discusses and justifies recommendations. The committee then shares recommendations and findings with the superintendent.
2. The superintendent reviews recommendations and studies supporting data and resources. The superintendent makes a recommendation to the school board that would include a summary of the committee's findings.

3. The school board analyzes and studies the recommendation and findings. The school board makes a decision by balancing what is best for Delta and the district as a whole.

Curriculum

Does Delta's curriculum selection and delivery process need to change if teachers are meeting state/national standards identified for their subject area?

No. In all Pennsylvania public schools, all teachers are required to teach the state standards; as it has always been at Delta, teachers may continue to collaborate with students to identify course topics that meet the standards for each subject area.

Would Delta students be able to take classes at State High? Yes.

If Delta students took AP or IB courses at State High, could the data in Synergy/PowerSchool be attributed back to Delta? Yes.

Graduation and College Admissions

Could Delta benefit from determining its own graduation requirements, giving Delta flexibility rather than being tied to State High requirements? This could be accomplished via the democratic process and with school board approval.

Could Delta be able to create its own diploma? Yes, this could be accomplished via the democratic process and with school board approval.

Could Delta have its own graduation ceremony? This could be a possibility, but it was sensed that this was not necessarily desired by students on the committee.

Are graduation rates at Delta higher than at State High? They are very comparable.

What would a diploma and transcript say if Delta became a school?

This would be part of the Delta democratic process. Below are some possibilities of what it could be:

- State College Area Delta Program or Delta School
- State College Area High School - Delta Program or Delta School
- State College Area School District - Delta Program or Delta School
- State College Area School District

What is the impact on the school profile for college applications?

Penn State's Admissions Office shared it does not put emphasis on a school's overall profile. Rather, the courses that a student takes (and how well they perform in said courses) are what Penn State focuses most of its attention on in the admissions process. As a school, Delta would

follow a similar process as before, in which the counselor provides a supplement to each transcript sent out, explaining what Delta entails.

College Admissions Insight from Yale

Rob Jackson, a former admissions officer at Yale, confirmed that admissions officers do not hold an applicant's school against them, but rather they want to ensure a student is taking full advantage of what is available to them. However, he did caution that they may take a school's diversity and/or size into consideration to determine if a student could be successful at their university. If a student is coming from a small high school and applying to a large university or coming from a less diverse student body, they may think that a student would be less able to adapt to a larger, more diverse environment.

Sports

Would Delta students be able to participate in sports and activities at State High? Yes.

According to the PIAA Constitution and Bylaws, Article III, Section 5, students in a magnet/alternative school (or like), where that school does not offer/sponsor any PIAA sports teams, are afforded the opportunity to participate in their home district and PIAA sports teams. They are automatically eligible to participate.

Article III, Section 5: All students attending Alternative Schools, Magnet Schools, or Technology Schools, which do not offer any interscholastic athletic programs, are eligible to participate in interscholastic athletics at the schools that the students would otherwise attend by virtue of their residences.

Would playoffs be jeopardized for SCASD teams? No. If the Delta program is identified as a magnet school within SCASD, there would be no change in the athletic structures or interference with playoffs. Regarding eligibility, the athletics office would still monitor academic progress and grades as per PIAA Chief Operating Officer Mark E. Byers.

If you combined sports teams at the middle school level, do you have to petition the PIAA every year to do this? No, as per PIAA Chief Operating Officer Mark E. Byers.

Would Delta be considered a cooperative school within the same district related to Article III Sections 9 and 10 a & b?

Mark Byers from the PIAA office shared that the relationship between the Delta Program and the High School / Middle Schools is not that of a cooperative. As a designated magnet school, students can participate in athletics within their school district with no limitations on post-season or otherwise.

He asked that we reference Article III, Sections 4 and 5.

Section 4.

Combination of Students Enrolled in Grades 7-8-9. Students enrolled in grades 7-8-9, within the same public school district, may be combined to form one or more Teams within the public school district.

Section 5.

Alternative School Students, Magnet School Students, and Technology School Students.

Data

Would Delta students still have to take PSSA/Keystones? Yes, they are required by state and federal governments.

Can MAP data be used to assess student growth?

Yes. MAP assessments are being used with Delta students in grades 6,7,8 and 9 to assess growth, not achievement. However, MAP cannot replace state assessments because PSSAs/Keystones are mandated by PDE.

Can you disaggregate the Delta data from the PA School Climate survey?

No. This data is anonymous and is housed within each individual school. At present, Delta's Climate Survey data is intermixed with their home schools. This means that Delta cannot use survey feedback to assess the climate within Delta.

Did Delta numbers for PSSA/Keystone opt-outs cause the other school buildings to write plans? No.

What schools completed improvement plans for PDE in the last few years?

Since the improvement plan process was implemented in the last few years, State High has been the only school asked to write a plan, but only for English Language Learner (ELL) students.

What is an improvement plan for PSSA/Keystones opt-outs?

It is simply three questions/items that we need to respond to the PDE. So, if Delta were to become a school and threshold triggers (outlined below), we could have to respond to these questions:

1. Provide a narrative that analyzes the root cause or causes for participation falling below the 95% threshold in your school.
2. Provide an action plan detailing strategies in which the school will engage to increase participation in the upcoming school year.
3. Provide a timeline for the implementation of each strategy.

What is the PSSA/Keystones threshold that triggers a school to write an improvement plan? The following steps would have to be met in order for a school to have to write an improvement plan:

- First Step: A school needs to have less than 95% school-wide participation on PSSAs/Keystones.
- Second Step: PDE would have to determine whether a school exhibits low student achievement and low student growth.
- Third Step: PDE also would have to identify those exhibiting challenges in graduation rate, regular attendance, career readiness, and/or English proficiency.
 - Exception this rule is listed below
 - For high schools only, PDE would then have to designate any schools, regardless of steps 1, 2 and 3, with a graduation rate at or below 67%.

Source: [Slide 18](#) of “The Future Ready PA Index and School Accountability,” titled “School Improvement Designations.”

What does the 2022-2023 PVAAS growth at Delta Middle School look like?

- 7 teachers/subjects - Meets (see scale below)
- 1 teacher/subject - Below
- 1 teacher/subject - Well Below

PVAAS Teacher Rating Scale:

- Well Above: Significant evidence that the teacher's group of students exceeded the growth standard.
- Above: Moderate evidence that the teacher's group of students exceeded the growth standard.
- Meets: Evidence that the teacher's group of students met the growth standard.
- Below: Moderate evidence that the teacher's group of students did not meet the growth standard.
- Well Below: Significant evidence that the teacher's group of students did not meet the growth standard.

Would Delta be writing improvement plans for PSSA opt-outs every year?

We don't believe so. It is highly unlikely that Delta would qualify for a school improvement plan, based on the historic performance of the district at the secondary level. At the district level, the district doesn't meet the criteria for schools being designated as exhibiting low student achievement in PSSAs or Keystones and low student growth in PVAAS. In other words, it's not solely about participation; there are multiple factors that are taken into consideration.

We derived this based on a PDE Future Ready Indicators Training on November 6, 2023, provided by Brian W. Campbell, Director of Bureau of Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction - PA Department of Education.

We asked the PA Department of Education: If Delta stayed a program, how difficult would it be to recreate the Future Ready PA Index for Delta?

The data that makes up the index is pulled from six sources (some of which are outside of PDE): Data Recognition Corporation, Bureau of Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction, Bureau of Career and Technical Education, Educational Names and Addresses (EdNA), Pennsylvania Information Management System (PIMS), and SAS, Inc.

Data Type - Assessment Measures:

- Could recreate: Percent of Proficiency, Participation, and Percent Advanced.
- Could not recreate: Growth (PVAAS)

Data Type - On-Track Measures:

- Could recreate: EL Growth and Attainment, Regular Attendance, Early Indicators of Success (Same as percent proficient above)

Data Type - College and Career Measures:

- Could recreate: Career Standards Benchmark. Cohort Grad Rates
- Could not recreate: Industry Based Learning, Rigorous Courses of Study, Post Secondary Transition

Because we can recreate only portions of the Future Ready index but not all, the omissions would present a fractured profile, resulting in an incomplete picture.

This information was provided by Brian W. Campbell, Director of the Bureau of Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction - PA Department of Education.

If we have clearer test results that are not what we wish them to be, how would that impact the teaching?

All school buildings, including Delta, develop targeted building goals as part of the district's strategic planning process. This process helps identify areas for improvement and is an essential step toward getting better for all of our schools and the district. Test results would allow us to recognize strengths and areas for improvement across the major academic areas and identify specific demographic groups that need academic support; this is an important component of our equity efforts. Utilizing this data would assist us in providing resources to teachers and support staff through targeted professional development and training or identifying other resources that might be needed, such as other types of support staff.

Enrollment

What is the 2023-2024 Delta enrollment breakdown by sending school?

- 86 students zoned for PFMS attend Delta
- 50 students zoned for MNMS attend Delta

- 167 students zoned for State High attend Delta

What is the total enrollment for the schools?

- PFMS: 728
- MNMS: 666
- State High: 2,214

School Catchment for Delta by Attendees Percentage of Enrollment

- PFMS 12%
- MNMS 8%
- State High 8%

Elementary Catchment for Delta Middle (grades 6-8) out of 137 total students

- Easterly Parkway - 4
- Mount Nittany EL - 5
- Radio Park - 12
- Spring Creek -12
- Ferguson Twp - 13
- Grays Woods - 14
- Park Forest El - 15
- Coral Street - 31
- A private school in/out of Centre County - 1
- CLC - 1
- Friends School - 2
- Homeschooled - 2
- Nittany Valley Charter - 3
- Parent did not report or specify the prior school for 5th grade - 21

Special Education Data (IEPS only)

Percent Special Education:

- SCASD 13%
- PA State 19.3%
- Delta Middle 21%
- Delta High 30%

Demographic Data

	<u>Delta (11/20/23)</u>	<u>SCASD (22-23)</u>
American Indian/Alaska Native	.30%	.20%
Asian	2.78%	8.60%

Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	.70%	.10%
Black	.70%	2.70%
Hispanic	4.70%	4.50%
White	81%	76.70%
Two or more races	5%	7.20%
Undisclosed	4.7%	
Economically Disadvantaged (22-23)	15%	19.1%
IEPs (Not GIEPs)	30% Delta High 21% Delta Middle	13%
Population	291	3,587 (secondary)

Would Delta's enrollment process change if it were to become a school?

No, it would not necessarily change by Delta becoming a school or staying a program.

How does SCASD disseminate information about Delta to families?

Historically, we have not actively provided information district-wide about Delta to families transitioning into sixth and ninth grades other than the high school's [Curriculum Showcase](#) in January, which targets new, future, and current students and families. However, this year, we did send a letter to all fifth-grade families with information about the program, and we hosted two informational sessions for prospective students and their families.

Families can find information from these sources:

- [Delta High School level website](#)
- [Delta Middle School Level website](#)
- [Delta Program Facebook page](#)
- YouTube video [Why Do We Love Delta](#)
- [Local Realtor KBB](#) promotes Delta on its website

Are families who are new to SCASD told about the program during the enrollment process?

No. However, if families ask about the Delta Program during registration, they are given the information and offered a tour.

Publicly Viewable Information

What are the rankings for each of MNMS, PFMS, and State High for any standardized tests year over year?

A complete breakdown of information about our schools is available in the [Future Ready PA Index](#).

Does Delta have a comprehensive profile on popular sites such as Niche.com, GreatSchools.org, US News and World Report, and the Future Ready PA Index, which new families, especially those interested in small schools, can explore for information?

All four websites were searched, and Delta was not listed on any.

Are there popular websites that families use to make informed decisions about school?

- [Future Ready PA Index](#) is a collection of school progress measures related to school and student success. The Index includes a range of assessment, on-track, and readiness indicators to more accurately report student learning, growth, and success in the classroom and beyond.
- [Great Schools.org](#) provides ratings and comparison tools based on student growth, college readiness, equity, and test scores for U.S. public schools.
- [Zillow - Home Buying application](#) uses GreatSchools.org to share information about schools in a community where a house is located.
- Niche.com provides [school ranking data](#).
- US News and World Report School Rankings and [data sources](#).

Are there benefits of being part of publicly viewable online profiles?

Yes. transparency is extremely important for our school community because it cultivates parent engagement and trust. A school profile helps parents make informed choices about which school is the best selection for their child. Furthermore, it helps the public know how schools in their community are performing and enables comparisons.

Funding

Would Delta or SCASD receive more or less state or federal funding? No change in outside funding would be anticipated.

Would state or federal funding change based on school vs. program designation? No.

Would the local funding of Delta be affected by the switch to being its own school as compared to a program? No.

How is Delta currently funded on a federal/state/local levels?

In general, funds come on a per-pupil basis to the district, which then distributes the funds according to three tiers:

- District-wide costs to all schools

- Level-wide funding to schools; for example, at the elementary level, it applies to all eight elementary schools
- School-specific funding

Does Delta pull funds proportional to the students that come from State High, PFMS, and MNMS, similar to charter school funding?

Yes. Delta, as with all schools in the district, is given an operational budget proportional to the number of students and their specific needs.

What is the per-student spending for the 2022-2023 School Year?

The [costs for 2021-2022](#) are included below. The numbers vary for a number of different reasons, such as salaries, amount of students with special needs, number of program offerings, and student-to-teacher ratios.

- Park Forest Middle School: \$21,503
- Mount Nittany Middle School: \$22,037
- State High: \$20,022
- Delta Program: \$20,106

How has the district invested in Delta?

In January 2014, the school board supported the expansion of Delta into a middle school cohort. This has resulted in adding approximately 12 staff positions and adding a second floor to the State High construction plan to provide space for Delta Middle. This resulted in moving Delta from the Fairmont Building to the North Campus.

Miscellaneous

Is there a school board archive at the District Office about decisions of past school boards dating back to circa 1974?

The district maintains paper records dating back to the late 1800s. Electronic records date back to 2014.

Would Delta students be transported to school any differently? No.

Would Delta Middle still have recess? Yes.

Would Delta students still have a component of community service? Yes.

Does Delta need to change its name to be called a school? No, for example, Delta could be called Delta Academy or simply Delta.

If Delta became a school, how would Delta students access or be allocated parking spots?

We open parking to all seniors at the beginning of school with no prerequisite. Parking regulations apply to both high school and Delta seniors. Then, juniors can request a pass of

what is left over based on prerequisites of a course that requires you to be on campus before school starts or a course that requires you to leave during the day.

If Delta became a school, what school model would it take on? - If Delta became a school, Delta MS and Delta HS would be listed as two separate schools that are housed in one building.

Do other Pennsylvania school districts have programs similar to Delta? There are many examples within Pennsylvania school districts that emphasize specific areas of study (magnet schools) or a particular teaching method, though they do not follow the democratic process.

Are there any comparable schools that are Delta's size and align with the democratic philosophy?

Yes. Delta's sister school, [Lehman Alternative Community School](#) in the Ithaca City School District, is a democratic, alternative public combined middle and high school near Cornell University. The school serves grades 6–12 with approximately 305 students. The Lehman School is fed by two middle schools and one high school. Lehman is ranked in [US News and World Reports](#), [GreatSchools.org](#), and [Niche.com](#).

Pros and Cons of Staying a Program or Becoming a School

- If Delta **remained a program**, what reasons could we identify to support Delta staying as a program? [Click here](#)
- If Delta **became a school**, what reasons could we identify to support Delta becoming a school? [Click here](#)

Next Steps

- Stakeholder Presentations (to include T-charts, Fast Facts, and Impact Chart)
 - 3/13 - Delta Students 12:10 PM
 - MS - by Korben, Karen, Linnet, Jonathan
 - HS - by Sacha and Zofia, Diane, Jonathan
 - 3/13 - Delta PTSO 7:00 PM - by Jon, Jonathan
 - 3/19 - Delta Staff 3:45 PM - by Jon, Andrea, Jonathan
 - 3/25 - Update to the Board - Jon, Jonathan
- Share a Feedback Form with Stakeholders
- Review Stakeholder Feedback and Assess Progress