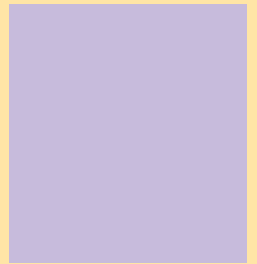
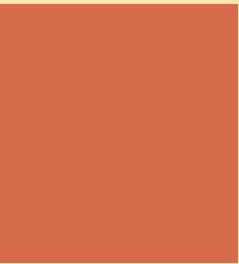
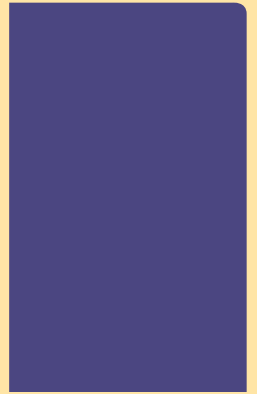




NEWARK
PUBLIC
SCHOOLS



**GREAT
EXPECTATIONS
2009-13
STRATEGIC PLAN**

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This strategic plan was developed with the help of scores of Newark Public Schools (NPS) administrators, principals, and teachers, as well as about two dozen community leaders from government, civic, business, and faith-based organizations, including the City of Newark, Committee of Advocates, Newark Alliance, Montclair State University, Rutgers-Newark, Newark Teachers Union, and the City Association of Supervisors and Administrators.

The Prudential Foundation, Victoria Foundation, and Nicholson Foundation provided important financial and intellectual support.

We also benefited greatly from the many hundreds of parents, guardians, and community members who participated in several community meetings (co-sponsored by the Committee of Advocates) and joined the conversation on our dedicated strategic plan Web site (www.greatschoolsnewark.org).

We relied heavily on student performance data, findings, and recommendations from recent audits and school-level data that helped identify areas of priority need.

The Institute for Educational Leadership, with support from the Community Building Institute and KSA-Plus Communications, oversaw development of this plan. The final plan was informed by an interim plan, *Moving Forward Together*, published in April 2009.

To all those who participated, our sincere thanks. The students of Newark owe you a debt of gratitude, as does the community. And NPS owes you our focused work.



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What matters most for Newark to have a great system of schools is *how* we get there and not just *when* we get there. Our goals, even when reached, cannot be sustained by the courageous efforts of individuals. Unity in action is the example of power we will claim as we journey through the change process. Our children deserve no less.

— Dr. Clifford B. Janey, State District Superintendent, Newark Public Schools



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

96.2% of community meeting participants agree that all teachers must have the skills and knowledge to provide quality instruction to meet the multiple and varied needs of students.

95.5% of community meeting participants say all new teachers should receive coaching and assistance from an effective “mentor teacher.”

96.6% of community meeting participants say all Newark high school students should be expected to graduate from high school.

A strategic plan represents a collective vision of where we intend to go ... and provides a basic blueprint of how to get there. For Newark Public Schools, it is a down payment on turning around our school system. The four priorities and 13 strategies described in this plan will drive all of our thinking, actions, and investments in the coming years. When we do what we say we are going to do, the community should expect to see steady gains in student progress, year by year.

The stakes could not be higher. Our youth need to be able to compete in an increasingly complex, competitive, and diverse world. Many of the best new jobs require not just a high school diploma but at least two years of college. We need to raise the bar, and we are. Our goals for 2013 are very challenging:

- **Ready to learn by kindergarten.** 80 percent of our students will be ready to learn by kindergarten, up from 64 percent in 2008–09.
- **Reading and writing at grade level by the end of 3rd grade.** 80 percent will be reading and writing by the end of 3rd grade, up from 40 percent in 2008–09.
- **Ready for the middle grades.** 80 percent of 5th graders will be proficient or above in language arts literacy and 85 percent or above in math, up from 40 percent and 59 percent, respectively, in 2008–09.
- **Ready for high school.** 80 percent will be “on track for graduation,” up from 38 percent of freshmen who are on track to begin the 2009–10 school year.
- **Ready for college or work.** 80 percent will graduate, and 80 percent of graduates will enroll in college, up from 54 percent and 38 percent, respectively, in 2008–09.



Despite some encouraging progress, we have a long way to go. We must do better. And we can.

The priorities, strategies, and actions in the following pages have been carefully crafted, guided by public discussions, and informed by data. They will move us in the right direction. But words will not transform the system. People will.

People who demand more of themselves and of each other. People who have high expectations for students and consistently send that message. People who are willing to think big, prepare well, take risks, work together, and be held accountable for results. That means all of us — administrators, teachers, staff, parents, community members, and of course, students.

The work starts with great expectations, but it must be powered by a relentless and focused commitment to keep our promises — to each other, to the children, to our community. It is time.

PRIORITY 1. Ensure highly effective teachers and principals deliver strong curriculum, instruction, and assessment

- A challenging curriculum, instructional program, and assessment consistently implemented
- Professional improvement plans, based on students' needs and performance
- Stronger pipeline of quality teachers and principals

PRIORITY 2. Build a system of great schools that serve students, their families, and the community

- Aligned Pre-K–grade 3 programs
- Stronger middle grades
- Transformed high schools
- Aggressive turnarounds for the lowest-performing schools

PRIORITY 3. Ensure that schools are safe, welcoming, and working collaboratively with parents, families, and community partners to support student success

- Safe, family-friendly schools
- Informed and involved parents and families
- Stronger community and national partnerships

PRIORITY 4. Improve our educational practice by creating an accountability system that promotes data-informed, effective, and efficient management and operations

- Reorganized and streamlined central and regional offices
- A culture and system of accountability
- Transparent decisionmaking and reporting

95.5% of community meeting participants think schools should offer career and college awareness opportunities in the middle grades so students start thinking about their futures.

100% of community meeting participants think that schools should provide “customer service” training for all school and central office staff to ensure that parents and families are treated courteously and with respect.

100% of community meeting participants think schools should serve as neighborhood centers, working with community partners to provide adult education, job counseling, and similar programs and opportunities for parents and families.



GREAT EXPECTATIONS:

FOR OUR CHILDREN, OUR FAMILIES, OUR STAFF, AND OUR COMMUNITY

In a 21st-century world where jobs can be shipped wherever there's an Internet connection; where a child born in Dallas is competing with children in Delhi; where your best job qualification is not what you do, but what you know — education is no longer just a pathway to opportunity and success; it is a prerequisite.

— President Barack Obama,
March 10, 2009

Today's kindergarteners will graduate from high school in 2022 and perhaps from college in 2026. Their years of highest earning potential will start in the 2040s and continue for another decade or two. Their older siblings and neighbors already are having to make their way in a more competitive and complex world.

What will today's students need to thrive? This strategic plan helps answer that question. It is ambitious but practical. We know that only a transformed system will help our children truly build the knowledge and the 21st-century skills to succeed at work, at home, in their neighborhoods, and as citizens. We also know that what took decades to create will take years to fix.

This document offers important priorities, strategies, and actions. They have been carefully crafted, guided by public discussions, and informed by data. They will move Newark Public Schools (NPS) in the right direction of every student graduating ready for college, work, and citizenship. But words will not transform the system; people will.

People will transform the system when they demand more of themselves and more of each other. Having great expectations starts in the classroom with students who believe that excellence does not depend on a ZIP code. It means recognizing that each child is full of unrealized potential, passion, and creativity — and is not just an unwrapped bundle of needs.

We also must expect more of the families of students. Families are the first adults to set expectations for children. Parents, guardians, and older brothers and sisters can make sure students do their homework, get enough sleep, and come to school ready to learn. And parents and guardians can help the school improve by being informed and involved.

Research shows that the single most important factor in student achievement over which the district has responsibility is the classroom teacher. Effective teachers care. They have high expectations. They are skilled at helping students learn, even when students are challenging. They find a way, year after year, to improve their craft, retain their enthusiasm, and inspire their students. They often extend their efforts beyond the minimum commitments because that is what it takes.

Teachers become committed to expecting more of themselves, each other, and their students when they are working for principals who truly lead and build a positive environment for learning throughout the school community.



Schools do better when they are well supported by central office, when administrators make getting things done easier, not harder. Principals should not have to spend so much time spinning wheels, resolving problems that should have been handled down-town. Central office staff, when they expect more of themselves and each other, serve as problem solvers and supports for principals and school staff.

Having partners step up is important as well. Partners are essential to schools' success, whether it is the Newark Teachers Union (NTU); the City Association of Supervisors and Administrators (CASA); the Newark City Government; the Newark Alliance; the Committee of Advocates; Montclair State University; Rutgers-Newark; or the many philanthropic foundations that so generously support our efforts (including Prudential, Victoria, Nicholson, Amelior, and GEM).

Raising expectations works. In a partnership that includes NTU and Seton Hall, Joseph Del Grosso, NTU president, has raised the bar at the Newton Street School. *The New York Times* reported:

Mr. Del Grosso has told teachers to expect to supervise more ... students, and, if necessary, to work with them on Saturdays. Teachers who are unwilling to do so will be moved to another school because they do not fit in with the plan for what is being called the "new Newton," he said.

The school also plans to have teachers specialize in certain subjects, like math or social studies, and may move out some teachers who lack such specialties, Mr. Del Grosso said.¹

And it is working. For example, the test results for students in math and language arts literacy have both risen significantly in the past year. The percentage of students testing as proficient or better in math went from 47 as 4th graders in 2008 to 80 as 5th graders in 2009, and in language arts it went from 30 to 69 for the same group of students.

Great expectations, like those emerging at some Newark public schools, must become the norm in every school and apply to every student, their parents, all staff, and our community. It is the only way that we will build a system of great schools. (See page 54 for some examples of success in NPS, according to recent independent audits.)

Raising expectations is not only important to our students; it is important for Newark as a city and Essex as a county. Without a skilled workforce and engaged, involved citizens, it will be difficult to attract desirable businesses. Also, when students progress in their education, they earn more and spend more. According to 2007 data for New Jersey, a student who does not complete high school earns, on average, approximately \$22,300 per year. A high school graduate earns, on average, \$32,000 per year, and a college graduate earns \$56,200 per year. To put these numbers in context, the real cost of living for a three-person family in New Jersey is about \$55,000 a year. When students learn, they earn.² And they also contribute more to the civic well-being of the community as good citizens, voters, volunteers, and good neighbors who are committed to service.

The research on urban school reform suggests strongly that accelerating and sustaining student achievement gains rests, in large measure, on the ability of the community to pull together in a single direction around an agreed-upon set of reforms that are defined around better instruction.

— Council of the Great City Schools, *Raising Student Achievement in the Newark Public Schools, 2007*



All children in our society deserve the opportunity to succeed in school, and we know, unequivocally, that teachers are the most important determinant of student achievement. At Montclair State University, we are committed to working in partnership with the Newark Public Schools to educate outstanding teachers who will make a difference in the lives of Newark's children and prepare them for full and productive participation in our democratic society.

— Susan A. Cole, President of
Montclair State University

We have a long way to go. It is no longer acceptable to graduate only 54 percent of our students as we did in 2009. It is no longer acceptable to have only 24 of our 11th grade students and 74 middle grades students (less than 1 percent) score at “advanced proficient” in both content areas in 2008. We must do better. And we can.

The stakes could not be higher. Our youth will need to be able to compete in an economy where the competition is not only stiff but global. Nations such as India, China, and Hungary are actively competing with us for jobs in virtually every industry. We also need to prepare our students for jobs close to home, where the Newark Alliance has targeted four major growth sectors: transportation and logistics; health services; education and “knowledge creation”; and entertainment, arts, and retail. Many of these require not just a high school diploma but at least two years of college. We recognize the new reality that students need basically the same preparation whether they are headed directly from high school to college or a career. We need to raise the bar, and we are.

This strategic plan represents a collective vision of where we are headed — and provides a basic blueprint of how to get there. For NPS, it is a down payment on turning around our school system. The four priorities and 13 strategies described in the following pages will drive all of our thinking, actions, and investments in the coming years. When we do what we say we are going to do, the community should expect to see steady gains in student progress, year by year.



OUR SHARED GOAL:

PREPARING ALL STUDENTS FOR COLLEGE, WORK, AND CITIZENSHIP

We are focusing on every major step in a student's career, making sure each and every student stays on track to graduate from high school and is prepared for the next phase of his or her life. Our students need to be:

- **Ready to learn by kindergarten.** Our goal is for 80 percent to pass the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) by 2013, up from 64 percent in 2008–09.
- **Reading and writing at grade level by the end of 3rd grade.** Our goal is for 80 percent of our students to be proficient or above on the state test by 2013, up from 40 percent in 2008–09.
- **Ready for the middle grades,** which at a minimum means reading and doing math on grade level by the end of 5th grade. Our goal is for 80 percent proficient or above in language arts literacy and 85 percent proficient or above in math by 2013, up from 40 percent and 59 percent, respectively, in 2008–09.
- **Ready for high school,** which is defined as “on track for graduation” (an index that includes test scores and attendance in grades 6, 7, and 8). Our goal is for 80 percent of freshmen to be on track, up from 38 percent at the start of the 2009–10 school year.
- **Ready for college or work,** which at a minimum means graduating from high school, enrolling in college classes without remediation, and contributing to Newark's development through community service projects. Our goal is for a graduation rate of 80 percent by 2013 and a college enrollment rate of 80 percent, up from 54 percent and 38 percent, respectively, in 2008–09. College enrollment is important but not sufficient; our graduates must be able to take credit-bearing college courses without remediation. That requires students to bring a new discipline to the traditional challenges of college life. Specifically, our goal is for 50 percent of our graduates to be able to enroll in two-year community colleges without remediation in English and reading and 40 percent without remediation in math. Although statewide data are not available, we know that 98 percent of NPS students attending Essex County College in fall 2008 required remediation courses in math and 87 percent required remediation in English and reading.

(See the following pages for the more detailed measures that we will use to report on our progress annually.)

High schools are our nation's front line in the battle to restore America's global competitiveness. High school completion is the first step in the earnings and skill ladder and the bridge to postsecondary education, work readiness, and lifelong learning.

— National Governors Association



OUR SHARED GOAL

Holding Ourselves Accountable for Steady Progress

HIGH SCHOOLS

(test results based on the state's 11th grade high school proficiency assessment [HSPA] test)

Indicator	BASELINE	BASELINE		GOALS		
	State 2009	Newark 2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
% advanced only	Literacy: 13% Math: 23%	Literacy: 2% Math: 6%	Literacy: 5% Math: 10%	Literacy: 8% Math: 15%	Literacy: 11% Math: 19%	Literacy: 13% Math: 23%
% proficient or advanced	Literacy: 84% Math: 73%	Literacy: 55% Math: 43%	Literacy: 64% Math: 54%	Literacy: 74% Math: 65%	Literacy: 83% Math: 76%	Literacy: 92% Math: 86%
% partially proficient (top)*	Literacy: 16% Math: 27%	Literacy: 33% Math: 54%	Literacy: 27% Math: 43%	Literacy: 20% Math: 33%	Literacy: 14% Math: 23%	Literacy: 8% Math: 14%
% partially proficient (bottom)*		Literacy: 12% Math: 4%	Literacy: 9% Math: 3%	Literacy: 6% Math: 2%	Literacy: 3% Math: 1%	Literacy: 0% Math: 0%
% of special needs students scoring proficient or above	Literacy: 47% Math: 29%	Literacy: 15% Math: 8%	Literacy: 23% Math: 17%	Literacy: 31% Math: 26%	Literacy: 39% Math: 34%	Literacy: 46% Math: 41%
Gender gap (% of females/males proficient or above)	Literacy/Math F-M gap: 6/0	Literacy/Math F-M gap: 12/1	Literacy/Math F-M gap: 10/1	Literacy/Math F-M gap: 9/0	Literacy/Math F-M gap: 7/0	Literacy/Math F-M gap: 6/0
Racial gaps: white/black, white/Hispanic, Hispanic/black (% proficient or above)	Literacy/Math W-B gap: 28/40 W-H gap: 19/27 H-B gap: 9/14	Literacy/Math W-B gap: 28/37 W-H gap: 22/23 H-B gap: 6/13	Literacy/Math W-B gap: 26/35 W-H gap: 20/21 H-B gap: 4/11	Literacy/Math W-B gap: 24/35 W-H gap: 18/19 H-B gap: 2/9	Literacy/Math W-B gap: 22/33 W-H gap: 16/17 H-B gap: 0/7	Literacy/Math W-B gap: 20/31 W-H gap: 14/15 H-B gap: 0/5
Graduation rate (based on National Governors Association standard)	N/A. State uses a different calculation.	54%	59%	65%	70%	80%
Attendance/truancy (% absent 18 days or more)	N/A. State uses a different calculation.	9th: 34% 11th: 46%	9th: 27% 11th: 36%	9th: 19% 11th: 25%	9th: 12% 11th: 15%	9th: 5% 11th: 5%
% of students scoring 3 or above on at least one AP exam	70%	21%	29%	36%	43%	50%
% of graduates who enroll in college	2-year: 31% 4-year: 29%	2-year: 17% 4-year: 21%	2-year: 21% 4-year: 27%	2-year: 26% 4-year: 33%	2-year: 31% 4-year: 39%	2-year: 35% 4-year: 45%
% of college enrollees not needing remediation**	N/A	NPS freshmen at Essex County College (fall 2008) English: 13% Reading: 13% Math: 2%		English: 22% Reading: 22% Math: 11%	English: 32% Reading: 32% Math: 21%	English: 41% Reading: 41% Math: 30%
% of employers who believe students are prepared for jobs***	N/A	42%	50%	60%	70%	80%

*The state has only one category (“partially proficient”) for all students who do not demonstrate proficiency on the NJASK or HSPA tests. To provide more clarity about performance, NPS has divided the “partially proficient” category in two: students who are in the top half of the “partially proficient” group (scores from 150 to 199) and students in the bottom half (scores from 100 to 149).

**The state is just starting to collect college remediation data. For now, we are using as a proxy data from Essex County College, which receives the largest share of NPS college students.

***NPS-specific data are not available. As a proxy starting point, we are using the percentage of Northern New Jersey employers who believe that students graduating from the state's K–12 education system are “very” or “fairly” well prepared for work. (Source: Workforce Challenges Survey, September 2008, North Jersey Partners.)



MIDDLE GRADES

(test results based on the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge [NJ ASK] test for grades 6, 7, 8)

Indicator	BASELINE	BASELINE					GOALS				
	State 2009	Newark 2009	2010	2011	2012	2013					
% advanced only	Literacy: 12% Math: 26%	Literacy: 3% Math: 9%	Literacy: 5% Math: 8%	Literacy: 8% Math: 7%	Literacy: 10% Math: 6%	Literacy: 12% Math: 6%					
% proficient or advanced	Literacy: 75% Math: 70%	Literacy: 47% Math: 41%	Literacy: 57% Math: 51%	Literacy: 67% Math: 61%	Literacy: 77% Math: 71%	Literacy: 86% Math: 80%					
% partially proficient (top)*	Literacy: 25% Math: 31%	Literacy: 48% Math: 45%	Literacy: 38% Math: 39%	Literacy: 30% Math: 33%	Literacy: 22% Math: 28%	Literacy: 14% Math: 20%					
% partially proficient (bottom)*		Literacy: 5% Math: 14%	Literacy: 4% Math: 11%	Literacy: 3% Math: 7%	Literacy: 1% Math: 3%	Literacy: 0% Math: 0%					
% of special needs students scoring proficient or above	Literacy: 36% Math: 32%	Literacy: 16% Math: 13%	Literacy: 24% Math: 22%	Literacy: 32% Math: 30%	Literacy: 40% Math: 38%	Literacy: 47% Math: 45%					
Gender gap (% of females/males proficient or above)	Literacy/Math F-M gap: 8/0	Literacy/Math F-M gap: 12/4	Literacy/Math F-M gap: 11/3	Literacy/Math F-M gap: 10/2	Literacy/Math F-M gap: 9/1	Literacy/Math F-M gap: 8/0					
Racial gaps: white/black, white/Hispanic, Hispanic/black (% proficient or above)	Literacy/Math W-B gap: 32/36 W-H gap: 25/25 H-B gap: 6/11	Literacy/Math W-B gap: 41/47 W-H gap: 26/25 H-B gap: 15/22	Literacy/Math W-B gap: 39/45 W-H gap: 24/23 H-B gap: 15/22	Literacy/Math W-B gap: 37/43 W-H gap: 22/21 H-B gap: 15/22	Literacy/Math W-B gap: 35/41 W-H gap: 20/19 H-B gap: 15/22	Literacy/Math W-B gap: 33/39 W-H gap: 18/17 H-B gap: 15/22					
Prepared for high school (freshmen on track for graduation, based on an NPS at-risk/on-track index)	N/A. State does not use this calculation.	38%	62%	68%	74%	80%					
Attendance/truancy (% absent 18 days or more)	N/A. State uses a different calculation.	7th: 25%	7th: 20%	7th: 15%	7th: 10%	7th: 5%					

ELEMENTARY GRADES

(test results based on the state's NJASK test for grades 3,4,5)

Indicator	BASELINE	BASELINE					GOALS				
	State 2009	Newark 2009	2010	2011	2012	2013					
% students ready for kindergarten (based on DRA test)	N/A. State does not use this calculation.	64%	68%	72%	76%	80%					
% advanced only	Literacy: 7% Math: 31%	Literacy: 2% Math: 16%	Literacy: 3% Math: 19%	Literacy: 5% Math: 23%	Literacy: 6% Math: 27%	Literacy: 7% Math: 31%					
% proficient or advanced	Literacy: 64% Math: 75%	Literacy: 40% Math: 55%	Literacy: 51% Math: 62%	Literacy: 63% Math: 70%	Literacy: 74% Math: 77%	Literacy: 86% Math: 84%					
% partially proficient (top)*	Literacy: 36% Math: 25%	Literacy: 52% Math: 36%	Literacy: 42% Math: 30%	Literacy: 33% Math: 24%	Literacy: 24% Math: 20%	Literacy: 14% Math: 16%					
% partially proficient (bottom)*		Literacy: 8% Math: 10%	Literacy: 7% Math: 8%	Literacy: 4% Math: 6%	Literacy: 2% Math: 3%	Literacy: 0% Math: 0%					
% of special needs students scoring proficient or above	Literacy: 33% Math: 36%	Literacy: 13% Math: 31%	Literacy: 22% Math: 38%	Literacy: 30% Math: 45%	Literacy: 38% Math: 51%	Literacy: 45% Math: 56%					
Gender gap (% of females/males proficient or above)	Literacy/Math F-M gap: 8/0	Literacy/Math F-M gap: 9/4	Literacy/Math F-M gap: 9/3	Literacy/Math F-M gap: 9/2	Literacy/Math F-M gap: 8/1	Literacy/Math F-M gap: 8/0					
Racial gaps: white/black, white/Hispanic, Hispanic/black (% proficient or above)	Literacy/Math W-B gap: 29/31 W-H gap: 23/20 H-B gap: 5/10	Literacy/Math W-B gap: 38/42 W-H gap: 20/19 H-B gap: 18/23	Literacy/Math W-B gap: 36/40 W-H gap: 18/17 H-B gap: 18/23	Literacy/Math W-B gap: 34/38 W-H gap: 16/15 H-B gap: 18/23	Literacy/Math W-B gap: 32/36 W-H gap: 14/13 H-B gap: 18/23	Literacy/Math W-B gap: 30/34 W-H gap: 12/11 H-B gap: 18/23					
Attendance/truancy (absent 18 days or more)	N/A. State uses a different calculation.	5th: 21%	5th: 17%	5th: 13%	5th: 9%	5th: 5%					

*The state has only one category (“partially proficient”) for all students who do not demonstrate proficiency on the NJASK or HSPA tests. To provide more clarity about performance, NPS has divided the “partially proficient” category in two: students who are in the top half of the “partially proficient” group (scores from 150 to 199) and students in the bottom half (scores from 100 to 149).



After six years, it has become clear that No Child Left Behind has not succeeded in improving the quality of education available to America's neediest children. This Task Force is united around the need for a more comprehensive approach to federal policy that specifically responds to the needs of children and schools in low-income areas. Our "Bold Approach" identifies critical community support systems that can effectively work to narrow the disheartening achievement gap that exists in America.

— Pedro Noguera, New York University

A FIVE-TIER SYSTEM FOR A PORTFOLIO OF EXCELLENT SCHOOLS

Although student achievement is our ultimate goal, developing a system of great schools also is important. Schools are not only where children learn; they are often anchors of a community. Unfortunately, too many of our schools do not help their neighborhoods thrive. We need schools that attract families to neighborhoods and that are a consistent source of pride.

As part of building a system of great schools, we have developed a typology of schools — a way of categorizing our schools — to ensure all are on the right path.

- An **International Knowledge School**, comparable to the finest public schools in the world;
- A **High-Performing School**, comparable to the finest public schools in the state;
- A **Rapidly Improving School**, on its way to becoming a High-Performing School;
- A **Consistently Struggling School**, in which most students struggle to achieve proficiency, gains are inconsistent, and performance has not substantially increased; and
- A **Chronically Failing School**, in which most of the students do not achieve basic proficiency.

By 2013, all of our schools will be in the top three tiers. Schools that are not will be subject to increasing interventions until they turn the corner. Schools that are succeeding will have increasing levels of autonomy. A current assessment of all of our schools can be found in the appendix on page 53.

LAYING THE FOUNDATION FOR CHANGE

This strategic plan is an important step for NPS and caps a busy and encouraging year of planning and productivity. We already have put in place many of the key building blocks for improvement. We are working closely with the city to transform our alternative high schools into beacons of hope. We are collaborating with the Newark Teachers Union (NTU) on a national model approach for addressing ineffective teachers. A cross section of educators, parents, and others helped craft new policies on discipline and uniforms. "Instructional walkthroughs" in every school helped principals and teachers better understand academic strengths and weaknesses. Several audits of our nonacademic operations (from food service to procurement) have identified millions of dollars in potential cost savings that we can reallocate to schools and classrooms; these efficiencies will be especially important as we grapple with the realities of the economic recession and the *Abbott* court decision on school funding.

We have reorganized our schools into Pre-K–grade 12 clusters. This organization provides teachers, students, and parents with a clearer understanding of the preparation needed to successfully transition from high school to college or the workplace. Educators are starting to use several powerful new data tools, which are helping principals



and teachers pinpoint where their students need more support. Staff teams are identifying the specific indicators to measure the performance of every department and school and hold them accountable for meeting their goals. And, working with outside partners, we engaged in a community-based strategic planning process that gave hundreds of parents, educators, and community members numerous opportunities to help shape our future priorities and strategies.

Perhaps more important than any specific initiative, we are building a culture of excellence in NPS. It is a culture that places a premium on four guiding principles:

- **Transparency**, communicating more openly about our progress as well as our shortcomings;
- **Collaboration**, working with parents and partners from every corner of our community;
- **Accountability**, delivering on what we promise and focusing on results; and
- **Innovation**, knowing that we need to find a new approach to improve performance in the future.

Transparency, collaboration, accountability, and innovation are not ends in themselves but a new way of doing business that will help us realize the only outcome that really matters: **students who are prepared academically, socially, and emotionally for 21st-century life**. With your help, we can and will succeed.

The expectations of the 21st-century workforce and society place even greater demands on our school systems. ... When educators work in partnership with their elected leaders and their communities to ensure that every child is healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged, we equip each student with the skills for lifelong success — well beyond the day they graduate and leave our care.

— Dr. Gene R. Carter,
Executive Director and
Chief Executive Officer,
Association for Supervision
and Curriculum
Development



PRIORITY 1.

ENSURE HIGHLY EFFECTIVE TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS DELIVER STRONG CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION, AND ASSESSMENT

[We are told that] the District needs higher standards than the state standards — but don't we first have to have our kids meet the state standards?

— Community meeting participant, April 27, 2009, meeting, Belmont Runyon School

Of all the things that are important for good schools, nothing is as important as the teacher and what that person knows, believes, and can do.

— Jon Saphier, President, Research for Better Schools

KEY STRATEGIES FOR 2009–13

- Strengthen and align curriculum with rigorous standards, ensuring that it is engaging, challenging, and consistently implemented.
- Create a highly effective professional development system for teachers and administrators that is more focused on delivering quality instruction and aligned to the learning needs of each student.
- Ensure there is a highly effective teacher in every classroom and a highly effective principal in every school by strengthening the preparation, recruitment, induction, evaluation, recognition, and compensation of effective teachers and principals.

BACKGROUND

Quality instruction is at the heart of a successful school. Curriculum, instructional programs, and materials must be aligned with the standards, which are becoming more challenging. In addition, the curriculum needs to be relevant and engaging to keep middle grades and high school students in school and focused on their studies. Teachers deserve customized professional development that is based on the learning needs of their students. Principals need to be “instructional leaders,” trained to provide useful and timely evaluations and supports that teachers can use to strengthen their instructional strategies.

According to multiple measures, NPS is falling short in all areas. Too much of our curriculum is neither challenging nor engaging. It is delivered unevenly, with significant variations from class to class and school to school. Key subject areas such as literacy and social studies have not received the centralized focus and resources that are required to support teachers and schools. Parents report, and our “instructional walkthroughs” confirm, that too many students are bored and disengaged. It also is a fact that some of our students come to school unprepared for learning and unconcerned about the consequences of an inadequate education.

Professional development has been uncoordinated, ad hoc, and too rarely connected to the standards, curriculum, and instruction. According to a recent analysis of 18 NPS schools, “Administrators do not monitor the quality of teaching and learning or the impact of professional development on classroom practice closely enough.” Further, “professional development opportunities are not consistently well matched to individual teacher needs.”¹ We will address these challenges.



IMPLEMENTING THE KEY STRATEGIES

A. Strengthen and align curriculum with rigorous standards, ensuring that it is engaging, challenging, and consistently implemented.

As the state ratchets up the rigor of its standards, we must ensure that our curriculum and lesson plans are aligned to these more challenging expectations, especially at the high school level. The Council of the Great City Schools (CGCS), for example, found in 2007 that “[t]he district’s curriculum documents do not define clearly for teachers what to teach, in what sequence, and at what levels of rigor. The result is that individual teachers are forced to use their best judgment in planning and organizing the curriculum for their own use. This also means that students transferring between schools within the district may not find the same levels of expectations about what they are expected to know from one school to another.”²

The more recent 2009 audit by MGT of America found: “Without strong curriculum policies, staff may continue to do what they have always done. MGT consultants could not locate specific, up-to-date curriculum policies. Existing policies lack the procedural guidance to ensure that the district curriculum is aligned with state standards and assessment, ensure benchmark assessments, and establish the rigor necessary for students to be academically successful.”³ Although Cambridge Education’s spring 2009 audit of 18 NPS schools found that most have “an appropriately broad and balanced curriculum that is compliant with standards,” it also found “an inconsistency in the quality of teaching and learning in each school, with a lack of variety in teaching styles, too little interactive learning, and insufficient opportunities for students to develop their critical thinking and problem-solving skills.”⁴

Just as important, we will take multiple steps to ensure that teachers and principals in all classrooms and schools are actually implementing the curriculum. The “instructional walkthroughs” conducted in all schools this past year confirmed what we have learned from previous audits and conversations: Too many schools are just “winging it.”⁵ The CGCS found: “Implementation of the district’s curriculum and programs is irregular. Principals monitor classroom instruction, but not the implementation of the curriculum Site visits often found teachers not using any of the materials purchased by the school district.”⁶ The result is that students receive an inconsistent mish-mash of instruction, some of which is challenging and aligned to the standards and assessments, but much of it is not.

Arts education will be one of the areas of emphasis in strengthening the curriculum and its implementation. Arts education fosters the ability to make rich connections and develop competencies across all disciplines throughout the curriculum. It develops a cluster of key “habits of mind” that include creative thinking and making connections to many aspects of human culture and experience. Because creativity is an extended process involving many steps, arts education promotes critical thinking and complex problem-solving skills. Arts education often provides a way for students to engage with community, civic, and social issues. The arts offer a unique opportunity for students to express themselves beyond verbal language, thus enabling self-discovery, creative thinking, and intercultural learning through multiple learning styles; in this respect, they can be a portal to some students who are

We need to focus on having a stable and consistent curriculum for all students instead of throwing last-minute “quick fixes.”

— Community meeting participant, April 30, 2009, meeting, Camden Middle School

The arts can be transformative for children — pivotal to the development of identity, discipline, self-esteem, and the capacity to enjoy the world. Not every child is an A student. Not every kid excels at soccer. Some kids are good at dance or theater or can play jazz trumpet really well. This is how they connect and evolve. The arts contribute to the restoration of our common humanity, lift us to our better selves, and are a healing force in a divided world.

— Lawrence P. Goldman, President and CEO, New Jersey Performing Arts Center



We need the right tools in the classroom to help students learn at their own rate We need to connect head and heart.

— Community meeting participant, June 23, 2009, meeting, Science Park High School

Use teachers who already know “what works” as experts.

— Community meeting participant, April 29, 2009, meeting, Rafael Hernandez School

otherwise disengaged and at risk of dropping out.⁷ Finally, the arts foster interactive learning and performance discipline through practice. Many artistic disciplines require close coordination with peers, as in a dance ensemble or orchestra, thus developing key life skills such as collaboration and discipline. At present, access to arts education is uneven across the district, with some schools fairly well-served, while most are underserved in one or more of the four core curricular disciplines: visual, music, dance, and theater. At the same time, the district underutilizes the extensive community of nonprofit arts organizations that are eager to serve Newark students with quality in-school- and out-of-school-time programming and to deliver professional development for classroom teachers.

With implementing clear curriculum comes another step, eliminating the potpourri of programs and initiatives that have built up over the years and, for the most part, only been partially implemented. Schools, and more important, teachers can be overwhelmed with all the different programs that are designed for delivery in the classroom. We will be pruning our programs to ensure all align with key goals and strategies.

Key action steps:

- **Develop and distribute standards-based, grade-level curriculum frameworks, pacing guides, and lesson plans and establish processes for helping teachers make use of these tools.** A top priority is to make sure that all teachers have access to and know how to use the “cumulative progress indicators,” which describe the increasing rigor expected as students advance through school. We also will develop and widely distribute exemplary lesson plans, using a model template, in all subjects and grade levels, which will help teachers develop and refine their own lesson plans, and create “curriculum maps” that ensure alignment from grade to grade. It is especially important that teachers have access to and learn how to take advantage of interdisciplinary curriculum and lesson plans as well as culturally connected African American, Latino, and multicultural themes, which tend to make instruction more engaging and relevant.
- **Evaluate all high school course offerings** (including vocational programs) to ensure that they are aligned with current postsecondary expectations, and eliminate those that are not.
- **Create standalone offices of language arts and literacy, social studies, and world languages** to focus needed attention on these core subjects and complement our current offices of mathematics and science.
- **Provide more instructional “time on task.”** Expanding the school year by five days this year is an important first step to ensure that NPS students have additional instructional time. (See Priority 3, page 32, for a discussion of additional extended learning opportunities after school.)
- **Introduce a system of interim assessments** that will measure performance four times a year to monitor if students are on track in language arts literacy, math, and science. We will use interim assessments tied to the state and a student achievement data warehouse. We will administer a new college placement test for all students at the end of their junior year so that they have time to catch up during the summer and as seniors.



- **Establish a standardized system for identifying and delivering appropriate services to gifted and talented students, K–12.** Although we have made some progress in adding honors and advanced placement courses in high school, we now must provide similar enrichment opportunities to elementary students who are ready for additional challenges. A top priority this year is for all teachers in grades 3–8 to ensure advanced students have opportunities for additional research and independent study projects.
- **Assess the current status of arts education in every school and develop a districtwide strategy,** which employs both district staff and nonprofit arts education providers, to ensure that every school has a robust arts education program based on New Jersey’s core content curriculum standards.
- **Strengthen the special education program by implementing recommendations from the recent MGT of America audit.** These include reorganizing and streamlining the office of special education, improving transition services from secondary programs to postsecondary opportunities, increasing inclusive educational options for students with disabilities from the most restrictive setting (out-of-district placement) to the least restrictive setting (general education classroom with consultation), and implementing a consistent and appropriate Intervention and Referral Service process in all schools throughout the district.
- **Review and revise student promotion policies** and strengthen them, as needed, to ensure that students are not being advanced to the next grade until they are ready. Students now can be retained only once, in either 3rd or 7th grade.

We know we are on the right track when:*

- A growing percentage of schools are implementing the district’s curriculum, as measured by “instructional walkthroughs” and School Quality Reviews.
- A growing percentage of classes have engaging instruction, as measured by “instructional walkthroughs” and School Quality Reviews.
- A growing percentage of schools provide sustained, sequential instruction in at least three of the four artistic disciplines.
- All students are benefiting from interim assessments administered four times a year.
- A growing percentage of students have access to gifted/talented and advanced programs, from elementary through high school.

***ON THE RIGHT TRACK**

For each of the 13 strategies in this plan, we have started to develop measures by which we will know that implementation is on track. Our year 1 priorities are to (1) gather baseline data for each indicator and (2) use these baselines to establish performance goals and begin measuring and reporting our progress. This work will be done as part of the effort to develop a “balanced scorecard,” which will help hold all departments and staff accountable for effectively implementing this strategic plan.

96.2% of community meeting participants agree that all teachers must have the skills and knowledge to provide quality instruction to meet the multiple and varied needs of students.

We don’t hear a lot about mentoring principals — they need to be mentored and evaluated [too].

— Community meeting participant, April 29, 2009, meeting, Rafael Hernandez School



90.9% of community meeting participants think there should be more opportunities for principals and teachers to visit each other's classrooms and schools to learn firsthand from their peers about successful approaches.

As an effective school leader you have to believe in the evaluation process as a tool.

— Community meeting participant, April 29, 2009, meeting, Rafael Hernandez School

B. Create a highly effective professional development system for teachers and administrators that is more focused on delivering quality instruction and aligned to the learning needs of each student.

High-performing and/or fast-improving school districts place a premium on delivering staff development that is closely aligned to the grade-level and subject-matter curriculum objectives. Unless principals and teachers thoroughly understand the curriculum, they are unlikely to teach it well. According to the National Staff Development Council, effective professional development is a key lever for increasing student achievement. An analysis of evaluation research found programs that offered substantial contact hours of professional development (ranging from 30 to 100 hours in total, spread over 6 to 12 months) boosted student achievement by approximately 21 percentage points.⁸

Recent audits and conversations with school administrators, however, indicate that NPS' professional development is haphazard, ad hoc, and not well aligned with the district's learning priorities. The 2007 CGCS audit, for example, found: "The district provides a substantial amount of professional development but lacks a mechanism for tracking who participates in it or evaluating its effectiveness The district's professional development is mostly voluntary, rather than being required. The result is that the ability of the district to train all of its teachers and staff on its instructional goals and initiatives is dependent on voluntary attendance at professional development sessions The district does not appear to use its student achievement data very effectively to inform its professional development program or to differentiate its instruction."⁹ Cambridge Education's audit of 18 schools in spring 2009 found that administrators do not monitor the quality of teaching and learning or the impact of professional development on classroom practice closely enough and that professional development opportunities are not consistently well matched to individual teacher needs.¹⁰ Our efforts moving forward will focus on overhauling our current professional development system to ensure it supports our teachers and principals. Further, our new system will align with national standards developed by the National Staff Development Council (see the appendix on page 50 for highlights).

Key action steps:

- **Work closely with teachers, principals, vice principals, and department chairs to revamp the professional development system to ensure that development opportunities are customized to their needs and based on the performance of their students.** The top priority is to ensure that all educators are well versed in the district's standards-based curriculum and able to implement it. It is especially important that school administrators (principals, vice principals, and department chairs) have enough instructional expertise to help support and evaluate their teachers. "Teams of teachers should observe each others' classrooms using the same district or school language of instruction as the framework for their observations. These instructional rounds are modeled on medical rounds, whose main purpose is to observe and share best treatments and strategies," according to Dr. Robert Marzano.
- **Train administrators and teachers how to analyze student performance data,** including from the new interim assessments, and use the information to



strengthen instruction. This expertise is an essential first step for differentiating instruction to meet each student’s needs.

- **Conduct certificate-bearing professional institutes after school and on weekends** for two to six weeks, which will provide targeted support to teachers and principals in high-priority areas such as literacy. These will supplement the four days of district-mandated development and in-class coaching support.
- **Develop a professional development strategy that supports the expansion of arts programming in every school in the district.**
- **Require all external professional development providers to sign performance contracts that specify the expected outcomes.**
- **Create professional learning communities**, in which groups of teachers and principals can learn together from each other in areas of common need or interest as needed. These can be long term or short term, face to face or online.

We know we are on the right track when:

- A growing percentage of teachers and principals can identify at least two practices that they have changed as a result of the professional development they received.
- A growing percentage of teachers and principals report that they use student performance data to modify instruction.
- A growing percentage of students are engaged in class, as measured by the “instructional walkthroughs.”
- One hundred percent of external professional development vendors have performance-based contracts and are held accountable for achieving those results.
- A growing percentage of teachers are satisfied with their principals’ leadership.

C. Ensure there is a highly effective teacher in every classroom and a highly effective principal in every school by strengthening the preparation, recruitment, induction, evaluation, recognition, and compensation of effective teachers and principals.

Education is a people-intensive enterprise. Approximately 75 percent of the district’s budget is spent on personnel — the majority of that on classroom teachers, school administrators, and instructional coaches. Until we strengthen all parts of the “people pipeline,” from teacher preparation programs to methods for evaluating and compensating our professionals, student performance will not improve. Unfortunately, the NPS pipeline has multiple leaks. At the front end, we lose too many quality candidates to better-organized districts. Principals have had virtually no say in which teachers are assigned to their schools. Indeed, the lack of principal involvement in hiring and transfers has had a negative impact on morale and instructional continuity in the classroom. Further, we lose too many quality educators once they are on staff. We do not know how many new teachers leave after one year, two years, or three years. We do not know why our employees leave voluntarily other than for retirement. Until we put processes in place to collect, analyze, and use data on retention and attrition, we must rely on solid national research that suggests most new teachers leave a district because of lack of support.

95.5% of community meeting participants say all new teachers should receive coaching and assistance from an effective “mentor teacher.”

When there are a lot of new teachers, how do you find enough good mentors?

— Community meeting participant, April 29, 2009, meeting, Rafael Hernandez School



Good teachers/strong relationships equal great outcomes.

- Community meeting participant, May 5, 2009, meeting, Ann Street Elementary School

Veteran teachers also need feedback, critical friends, collaboration with peers.

- Community meeting participant, May 5, 2009, meeting, Ann Street Elementary School

A 2007 meta-analysis of reports on NPS by the Annenberg Institute for School Reform found “[e]quity issues affect the hiring, assigning, support, and, ultimately, retention of teachers across the system. These issues seem to contribute to ineffective teacher induction and support efforts, unacceptably high teacher attrition, and an overall level of limited teacher performance across the district.”¹¹

Key action steps:

- **The immediate challenge is to strengthen our infrastructure for teacher and principal recruitment, hiring, and induction.** Top priorities are to hire a K–12 recruiter with an outstanding record of results who will work with staff to develop clear processes that clarify roles and responsibilities and make better use of technology to help manage the work. This may include a partnership with an organization that specializes in preparing principals for turning around low-performing schools.
- **Give principals more authority to hire their instructional and non-instructional staff,** with central office playing a support role to ensure the principals know and use our hiring and induction processes. For this to work well, principals need to have the skills and knowledge to choose personnel effectively. To that end, we are rolling out the Haberman process, a systematic framework for hiring star teachers that is research-based, aligned to core values and best practices, and statistically reliable and valid.¹²
- **Start the recruitment and hiring process much earlier, beginning with the 2010–11 school year.**
- **Introduce the new teacher and principal evaluations to provide more thorough and objective assessments of educator quality.** Principal and teacher evaluations will be based in part on student achievement gains and staff, student, and parent satisfaction. A central part of principals’ professional development will be to instruct teachers in using the new evaluation tool effectively.
- **Continue to implement our model partnership program with NTU,** through which teachers receiving “unsatisfactory” evaluations are given targeted support and ultimately are removed if they continue to be ineffective in the classroom.
- **Build the capacity of the human resources department** to be both strategic and administratively effective in all hiring and transfer processes.
- **Track and improve the retention rate of highly effective new teachers.** Districts such as Rochester, NY, for example, have been able to retain four of five new teachers as a result of frequent mentoring assistance.
- **Develop and administer an annual “school climate and working conditions” survey** to get timely feedback from principals, teachers, and staff about their levels of satisfaction with a variety of aspects of their work experience, including growth opportunities, feedback on performance, teamwork, and work-life balance.

Once these basic building blocks are in place, we will begin to focus on several longer-term priorities:

- Explore strategies that create incentives for highly effective teachers to teach in high-poverty, low-performing schools.



- Develop robust assessment frameworks that allow the analysis of the effectiveness of professional development strategies and, more generally, teacher effectiveness. These frameworks will use growth models that track student achievement over time.
- Strengthen partnerships with Montclair State, Rutgers-Newark, New Jersey Institute of Technology, Seton Hall University, Essex County College, and the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey to improve the preparation of new teachers and principals and ensure that teachers-to-be who are transitioning from being in school to leading a classroom receive sustained support and coaching through their third year of teaching.
- Increase partnerships with alternative preparation programs (such as TeacherNex, The New Teacher Project, New Leaders for New Schools, and Teach for America) to ensure NPS has access to a wider range of qualified candidates.
- Develop a career ladder by giving teachers a chance to advance in the profession by becoming “cooperating teachers,” “mentor teachers,” or “master teachers.”
- Set performance goals and provide individual and/or schoolwide bonuses to those exceeding the goals by effectively implementing innovative work assignments.

We know we are on the right track when:

- The human resources office has the professional capacity to develop and implement high-quality processes for recruiting, hiring, staffing schools, and inducting new principals and teachers.
- A growing percentage of teachers and principals exceed the minimum credentials needed.
- There are progressively fewer classroom vacancies at the start of each school year, with a goal of 10 or fewer districtwide.
- Teacher hiring is based on research-based proven processes, such as the use of multiple indicators that include, but are not limited to, advanced degrees.
- There is a scale to measure the quality and effectiveness of professional development and an increasing percentage of teacher and principals rate the system as effective.
- Fewer teachers are tardy or absent, an indicator of professionalism and dedication.
- A growing percentage of principals are satisfied with the levels of central office support for recruitment, hiring, and induction.
- A growing percentage of principals are trained to conduct more thorough and action-oriented evaluations of teachers.
- A growing percentage of teachers say that annual evaluations provide useful feedback to them.
- A growing percentage of teachers and principals receive “proficient” and “distinguished” on the new NPS performance evaluation, which emphasizes instruction and instructional leadership, respectively.

FOR FIRST-YEAR ACTIONS ON PRIORITY 1, PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 44.

When interviewing new teachers, look for volunteerism and extracurricular activities that demonstrate they have a passion for children.

— Community meeting participant, April 27, 2009, meeting, Belmont Runyon School



PRIORITY 2.

BUILD A SYSTEM OF GREAT SCHOOLS THAT SERVE STUDENTS, THEIR FAMILIES, AND THE COMMUNITY

The Rutgers-based National Institute for Early Education Research recently released a report that evaluates the progress made by students who attended *Abbott* preschools compared to those who did not. The results are stunning. Students who attended two years of preschool increased their performance from the 50th percentile to the 67th percentile through 2nd grade. And only 5.3 percent of those who attended two years of preschool were held back in grade 2, compared to 10.7 percent of those who did not attend preschool. “This reflects pre-K’s considerable effects on learning and ability and results in savings to taxpayers,” the report said.¹

KEY STRATEGIES FOR 2009–13

- Build an aligned, supportive Pre-K–grade 3 pipeline that ensures students are ready for kindergarten, reading by grade 3, and prepared to move forward.
- Transform the middle grades experience to ensure students are prepared for high school — academically, socially, and emotionally.
- Dramatically transform our high schools, building a system of themed, college- and career-oriented schools that ensure all students graduate prepared for college, work, and citizenship.
- Implement an aggressive strategy for turning around low-performing schools that includes reconstitution, external partnerships, full-service “community schools,” and other effective strategies.

EVERY SCHOOL AN EXCELLENT SCHOOL

We should be proud of every school in our system. Every classroom in every school in our system must:

- Maintain a culture of high expectations.
- Actively support students and help remove barriers to learning that they may face.
- Foster positive and safe learning environments.
- Actively engage parents and guardians in the life of the school.
- Demonstrate excellence in teaching.

These principles, though, can be challenging to attain. Further, we have too many schools that are not helping their students make the progress that is possible. This is not the first concerted effort to transform schools in Newark; we must learn from our successes as well as our failures. And other school systems around the country face this challenge; we should learn from them as well.

There are a growing number of “high-poverty, high-performing” schools both in Newark and across the nation. They are often dubbed 90/90/90 schools because about 90 percent of the students are eligible for free and reduced-price lunch, 90 percent or more of the students are members of ethnic minority groups, and more than 90 percent of the students met or exceeded high academic standards, according to independently conducted tests of academic achievement.



These are exactly the kinds of gains we want to make in Newark public schools, improving our student achievement by up to 50 percentage points in four years. So, why do these schools succeed? Douglas Reeves, the researcher who first coined the term “90/90/90 schools,” found the following five common characteristics:²

- A focus on academic achievement;
- Clear curriculum choices;
- Frequent assessment of student progress and multiple opportunities for improvement;
- An emphasis on nonfiction writing; and
- Collaborative scoring of student work.

He further found that the techniques used by the 90/90/90 schools are implemented consistently and persistently, and most important, they are replicable. And in these schools, every adult counts. School leaders “recognized that the student’s day does not really begin in the classroom, but on the bus or perhaps during free breakfast. By committing their systems to consistency in the education and behavior of adults, these leaders ensure that every adult leader, from the bus driver to the food service employee to the classroom teacher, is regarded as a significant adult leader in the eyes of students.”³

Another hallmark of high-performing schools is they consistently innovate. Whether it is problem solving to address the particular needs of a student; crafting a new, school-wide approach to a vexing challenge; or using time more effectively, innovation and problem solving is a recurring theme. Fostering innovation, rather than the compliance mentality that pervades many of our schools, is a key to success.

These research-based practices undergird the strategies for school improvement described on the following pages.

OUR OVERALL GOAL

By 2013, every NPS school will be in one of three categories:

- An International Knowledge School,
- A High-Performing School, or
- A Rapidly Improving School.

Too many of our schools are now in the bottom two tiers (Consistently Struggling Schools and Chronically Failing Schools). A list of all schools can be found on page 53.

The strategies described on the following pages are informed by best practices and include targeted interventions designed to help all schools improve. The strategies also recognize that NPS needs priorities; we cannot do everything at once. (See page 44 for year 1 action priorities and responsibilities.)

In building a system of great schools, NPS recognizes that there is not one model for all schools. Indeed, our schools should offer a range of approaches and strategies that appeal to children and their parents. One size does not fit all administratively, as well. Autonomy, the amount of control a principal and other school staff have to make decisions,

First and most importantly, the 90/90/90 Schools had a laser-like focus on student achievement. The most casual observer could not walk down a hallway without seeing charts, graphs, and tables that displayed student achievement information, as well as data about the continuous improvement students had made. The data were on display not only in principals’ offices, but also throughout the schools. In addition, we saw school trophy cases full of exemplary academic work, including clear, concise essays, wonderful science projects, terrific social studies papers, and outstanding mathematics papers. In short, the 90/90/90 Schools made it clear to the most casual observer that academic performance was highly prized.

— Douglas Reeves,
High Performance in High-Poverty Schools: 90/90/90 and Beyond





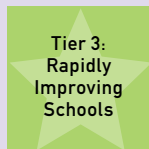
Tier 1: International Knowledge Schools

- One hundred percent of the students are ready to compete on an international level and are active participants in the learning process. Creativity and critical thinking are present 100 percent of the time.
- Teachers are committed to their students and creative and distinguished in content and instructional expertise. Adults and children have cultivated a culture of success.
- Teachers, administrators, and parents consistently make strategic use of data to assess, plan, and adapt instruction.



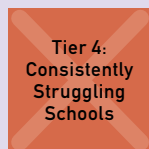
Tier 2: High-Performing Schools

- Ninety percent of the students are prepared for college and/or are job-ready, and all students are relatively active participants in the learning process. Creativity and critical thinking are common.
- Teachers have advanced knowledge of content and instruction and are committed to ensuring student success. Adults and children have cultivated a culture of success.
- Teachers, administrators, and parents frequently use data to assess, plan, and modify instruction.



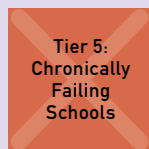
Tier 3: Rapidly Improving Schools

- Significant increases in student achievement happen from year to year. Many students are relatively active participants in the learning process. Creativity and critical thinking are sometimes present.
- Teachers have a basic knowledge of content and instruction and are committed to improvement. Most adults and children have cultivated a culture of success.
- Teachers, administrators, and parents are actively learning to use data to assess, plan, and modify instruction.



Tier 4: Consistently Struggling Schools

- Fifty percent of the students are prepared for college and/or are job-ready, and most students are relatively passive participants in the learning process. Creativity and critical thinking are rarely present; few adults have high expectations of children.
- Teachers have some knowledge of content and/or instruction, but teachers' efforts have not resulted in student achievement.
- Teachers, administrators, and parents rarely use data to assess, plan, and modify instruction.



Tier 5: Chronically Failing Schools

- Most students are not ready for college and/or job-ready, and they are commonly disengaged. Creativity and critical thinking are rarely present.
- Teachers may be qualified, but very few of their students succeed. Many adults have low expectations of children.
- Data are not used to assess, plan, or modify instruction.



needs to vary. In general, NPS believes that autonomy is earned. As schools become Tier 1 and Tier 2 schools, school leaders will have more autonomy because they have demonstrated, by the outcomes attained by their students, that they know how to ensure students succeed. Lower-performing schools generally will have less autonomy and will be guided in their decisionmaking and strategy development. There is an important exception to this. Schools that are entering a new turnaround strategy need flexibility in governance to ensure that they are able to deploy resources in ways that make a difference. Interventions might include performance-based partnerships, customized leader recruitment and professional development strategies, and fiscal incentives with accountability. This flexibility is critically important to success in turning around a school.

Our progress will be reported to the community in the form of annual reports on schools, regions, and central office, which will describe how each school and department performs in student achievement and other measures.

IMPLEMENTING THE KEY STRATEGIES

A. Build an aligned, supportive Pre-K–grade 3 pipeline that ensures students are ready for kindergarten, reading by grade 3, and prepared to move forward.

Preschool, research suggests, is the single most important investment that can be made to reduce the achievement gap and help children, especially those at risk, succeed. New Jersey, through the *Abbott* court rulings, has helped Newark and other jurisdictions develop excellent preschools, usually with a focus on preparing students for kindergarten. Recent research suggests that for the gains made in preschool to be sustained, preschool must be followed by aligned and integrated experiences in kindergarten through the 3rd grade.⁴ Further, 3rd grade offers a critical turning point; it is when children shift from “learning to read” to “reading to learn.”⁵

In Newark, many children do not attend preschool, and it can be hard, with the current process, for parents to find preschools with open slots. We will continue to work with other community agencies to create a central intake and placement process for young children in preschool programs of various types. These preschool programs should include *Abbott* preschools, programs for young children who are Limited English Proficient, programs for young children with disabilities, Head Start, infant/toddler programs, or any other community program that provides early education and care services to young children and their families. This collaboration will extend beyond placement. We will explore collaboration with community social agencies, health clinics, local physicians, and faith-based organizations to fully develop a continuum of identification, referral, screening, and preschool placement of eligible children, to the greatest extent possible.

Improving the quality of preschool programs also is important. We will account for the language development of each child, which will involve changes in how they get ready for kindergarten, whether in school or at home.

96% of community meeting participants say that preschool programs should offer courses for parents to help them better support their children’s academic and social growth.

Create magnet schools at lower levels from Pre-K up.

— Community meeting participant, April 27, 2009, meeting, Belmont Runyon School

Parents have misconceptions that one year of Pre-K is just as good as two years and that preschool is not important — that it is not real school.

— Community meeting participant, April 29, 2009, meeting, Rafael Hernandez School

Start introducing a second language at preschool level.

— Community meeting participant, April 30, 2009, meeting, Camden Middle School

[Children] need to be reading and writing by 2nd grade. Third grade is too late.

— Community meeting participant, June 23, 2009, meeting, Science Park High School



100% of community meeting participants agree that neighborhood preschool and elementary school teachers should meet regularly to help children make a seamless transition.

We talk about all the students having a foundation in learning at an early age in school. Let's not wait until they get into high school or college to send the message, "Stay in school!"

— Community meeting participant, April 27, 2009, meeting, Belmont Runyon School

80s babies learn better in interactive settings.

— Community meeting participant, April 29, 2009, meeting, Rafael Hernandez School

Teachers need more than a year with a child in Pre-K to 5.

— Community meeting participant, May 5, 2009, meeting, Ann Street Elementary School

In general, NPS classrooms do not score as well as they should on the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS), the industry standard. One of the challenges is that there are only one or two preschool programs in a school building. Preschool staff members, therefore, often work in isolation, making it more difficult to improve their practice. The actions below recommend creating preschool centers that bring multiple classrooms together. This will not only create a collegial network, it also will make investments in equipment and facilities, such as playgrounds, more efficient because the investments will serve more children. The district has ample space in school buildings to create preschool centers with four to six preschool classrooms per center within a school or schools in each of the four regions. Such a center-based approach could improve the overall provision of quality preschool programming, as well as their management and supervision. This recommendation and analysis parallel a recommendation offered by MGT of America in its audit of NPS operations.

Key action steps:

- **Create a communitywide, streamlined system of entry for all preschool services throughout the city.** Use this framework to increase the participation of 4-year-olds from 58 percent to 90 percent and of 3-year-olds from 43 percent to 90 percent.
- **Ensure all preschool providers (including NPS) are meeting standards of quality,** measured by an ECERS score of 5 or higher. If an outside provider is not meeting the ECERS standard, its contract will be terminated. If an NPS classroom is not meeting the ECERS standard, it will have one year to improve its quality or the Chief Academic Officer must intervene and take steps to ensure quality, which could include moving or closing the classroom.
- **Improve the curricular alignment between preschool and early elementary school,** establishing a seamless, developmentally appropriate Pre-K–grade 3 pathway that ensures all children are reading.
- **Create preschool centers in NPS,** with at least one preschool center per region. Build these preschool centers as the foundations for literacy.
- **Create additional kindergarten classrooms in underserved parts of the city.**
- **Create a collaborative working group for all preschool providers,** including NPS, to work together on these priorities. Establish similar collaborative frameworks at the neighborhood level to foster alignment among preschools that feed particular elementary schools.

We know we are on the right track when:

- A growing percentage of entering kindergarten students have satisfactory DRA scores and are ready to read.
- A growing percentage of students are reading independently 30 books a year by the end of grade 3.
- Ninety percent of all 4-year-olds are enrolled in a preschool program by 2013.



- Ninety percent of all 3-year-olds are enrolled in a preschool program by 2013.
- One hundred percent of preschools receive an ECERS score of 5 or higher by 2013.

B. Transform the middle grades experience to ensure students are prepared for high school — academically, socially, and emotionally.

At one point, the middle grades were largely neglected during conversations about school improvement; many considered them an unimportant way station on the path to high school — a chance for students to deal with the challenges of adolescence but with minimal expectations for achievement. More recently, the critical importance of the middle grades has become more apparent. For example, a 2007 study by Johns Hopkins University researchers found that a few simple factors from the middle grades (grades, attendance, and behavior) can predict, with 75 percent accuracy, which students will drop out long before they do.⁶ If these students are identified in the middle grades, schools can create targeted and timely interventions that can dramatically improve the chance of high school success. Students who leave 8th grade without the essential skills they need to be on target for college and career readiness too often never catch up.

We will improve our curriculum and instruction to ensure NPS students can compete anywhere. Further, despite recent strides to improve middle grades education, Newark has not had a systemic, comprehensive approach with its partners that focuses on improving the outcomes and learning environments for all young adolescents in the district. We will start there.

Key action steps:

- **Work with principals, teachers, parents, and central office to develop a clear, comprehensive strategy for all schools that have middle grades.** This will include developing a holistic approach to education that values students' academic success and social-emotional development and that makes learning more engaging and challenging. NPS initially will work with the Academy for Educational Development, whose Middle Start program has been successful in urban districts across the country. We will identify and begin discussions with other successful middle grades programs this year.
- **Provide intensive training for principals and vice principals in four key areas:** (1) understanding adolescent development and its implications for instruction, discipline, and the organization of middle grades schools; (2) using data (including, but not limited to, test scores) to design and implement rigorous and customized instruction; (3) helping teachers through leadership development collaborate across grade levels and subjects through thematic curriculum units that make learning engaging and challenging; and (4) establishing college awareness and readiness programs to expose students earlier to their opportunities beyond high school. This in-depth training initially will focus on 10 low-performing schools in 2009–10.
- **Expand the interdisciplinary curriculum** from the 23 K–8 schools now using it to all middle grades programs.

95.5% of community meeting participants think schools should offer career and college awareness opportunities in the middle grades so students start thinking about their futures.

Establish internships for middle school children.

— Community meeting participant, April 30, 2009, meeting, Camden Middle School



96.6% of community meeting participants say all Newark high school students should be expected to graduate from high school.

Allow three-, four-, and five-year high school graduation paths.

— Community meeting participant, April 27, 2009, meeting, Belmont Runyon School

Establish virtual classes for advanced learners.

— Community meeting participant, April 27, 2009, meeting, Belmont Runyon School

We should build strong academic programs in all schools. Why [plan for] just one early college high school?

— Community meeting participant, June 23, 2009, meeting, Science Park High School

- **Strengthen college- and career-awareness programs** to awaken middle grades students to their options after graduation.
- **Implement advisories to all schools with grades 6–12** in SY 2009–10. Continue to expand advisories in all grades with an aligned curriculum that is focused on college- and career-readiness. Advisories are regularly scheduled blocks of time when adults work closely with small groups of students to plan for success.

We know we are on the right track when:

- By the end of 9th grade, students are reading 60 books a year.
- All schools have implemented a proven middle grades program by 2013.
- A growing percentage of students in grades 6, 7, and 8 exceed the proficiency standard on the NJASK’s literacy and mathematics tests and are “on track” for high school graduation.
- By the end of 8th grade, students can write a quality 10-page research paper using primary and secondary sources.
- All middle grades students receive appropriate college and career counseling.
- Two schools serving middle grades are International Knowledge Schools in 2014. All other schools serving middle grades will be either High-Performing or Rapidly Improving schools by 2013.

C. Dramatically transform our high schools, building a system of themed, college- and career-oriented schools that ensure all students graduate prepared for college, work, and citizenship.

When we start by looking at our graduation rate of 54 percent, we know that too many of our high schools are not succeeding. We have an even more sobering data point when we examine the 98 percent of NPS enrollees who need remediation before they can go on to regular math coursework at Essex County College. Incremental change for our high schools is not enough.

Further, the curriculum of what students need to learn must be updated. As a recent Alliance for Excellence in Education report put it, “To prepare students for success in life, the twenty-first-century American high school needs to shift its focus from preparing for college or career to achieving college and career readiness for every student.” This approach is based on an analysis showing that whether a student is heading straight from high school to the job market or going to college, he or she needs the same kind of preparation to succeed.

We also know that many of our students do not understand the advantages of going to college or how to get there. Too many of our high schools do not have a culture that promotes going to college or giving back to the community. Helping students understand the advantages of community service and college — such as the



increased earning potential described in the introduction — can help build hope and direction for students and families.

Though the goal of college and career readiness must apply to all students, the paths must vary. It is necessary to create multiple pathways that help students succeed, anchored by schools with small learning communities and courses that are both rigorous and relevant, aligned with the local economy.⁸ This approach to high school transformation is based on developing a broad portfolio of schools:

A portfolio of schools is more than a mix of schools among which students choose. It is a strategy for creating an entire system of excellent high schools that uses managed universal choice as a central lever for district change.⁹

A portfolio of schools is like a garden. For a garden, one bases decisions on how well plants are growing. A portfolio of schools is managed on the basis of how well students are learning.

Key action steps:

- **Build a diverse portfolio of schools that offers a wide range of instructional themes, small learning communities, career academies, partnerships with higher education and business, and multiple pathways to graduation, all designed to make learning relevant and connect high schools to the local economy.** Our intent is to replace the city's large comprehensive high schools with smaller, more focused programs, often with industry and college partners, that provide students with instruction that is more relevant and engaging, starting in the 2010–11 school year. Steps toward building a diverse portfolio of schools include:
 - **Implement the Alternative High School Initiative**, in partnership with the city. Three Big Picture high schools, two Diploma Plus high schools, and one Gateway high school opened in September 2009, offering hundreds of students improved learning experiences.
 - **Implement the Early College High School initiative** where students can earn college credits while they are still in high school. The first class of 75 6th graders started in September and 75 more 6th graders will be added each year. Embedded in this initiative are strategies to accelerate student learning so that students not only catch up, they move ahead.
 - **Phase out the Twilight Program** after the 2009–10 school year. Determine whether to replace the Renaissance Program as well.
 - **Consider opening a state-of-the-art urban boarding school** where students would live on campus during the week.
 - **Revise enrollment policies** as necessary and improve outreach to ensure students have a choice among these diverse schools.

If a high school is working, it allows students to have their own experiences. Students learn by doing, not only alone but in groups.

- Community meeting participant, April 30, 2009, meeting, Camden Middle School

Struggling students need the best teacher in the building.

- Community meeting participant, April 29, 2009, meeting, Rafael Hernandez School

Social promotion: Get rid of it or get it right! Our students are being left behind because there is no accountability.

- Community meeting participant, April 27, 2009, meeting, Belmont Runyon School



Look at and copy what high-performing schools are doing.

— Community meeting participant, April 29, 2009, meeting, Rafael Hernandez School

- **Collect and analyze the data that provide a more in-depth understanding of how many students are “over-age and under-credited”** — and significantly at risk of dropping out without specialized programs and interventions. Use these data to formulate a comprehensive dropout prevention strategy with an “early warning system” linked to all high schools, the Alternative High School Initiative, and the Youth Employment and Education (YEES) Center.
- **Implement a comprehensive college awareness program** that starts in the middle grades and ensures all students know the advantages of going to college, know what they need to do to get there, and receive support for completing the necessary steps.
- **Establish performance-based contracts with community organizations to support “over-age and under-credited” youth.**

We know we are on the right track when:

- At least three new themed high schools or programs are opened by fall 2010.
- Two high schools are International Knowledge Schools in 2014. All other high schools will be either High-Performing or Rapidly Improving schools by 2013.
- An increasing percentage of NPS students are college ready, as measured by a rigorous transcript, SAT, ACT, and other national data.
- We have annual gains in the graduation rate.
- A growing percentage of NPS students enroll in college.
- We have more accurate and timely data to measure how many NPS students require remediation when they enter two- and four-year colleges or the workplace.
- A growing percentage of NPS students graduate from college.

D. Implement an aggressive strategy for turning around low-performing schools that includes reconstitution, external partnerships, full-service “community schools,” and other effective strategies.

A recent national study on restructuring low-performing schools in five states offered a set of clear findings. The first: “No single reform guarantees success. Schools that successfully turned around did a variety of things.” As one principal explained, “We need to do what’s good for kids and student achievement.”¹⁰

The schools in the study that exited restructuring or significantly improved student achievement had some common approaches. All schools:

- Had been working to improve student achievement for at least three years. Several schools started their strategies before they were in restructuring.
- Used “benchmark assessments” frequently (weekly to monthly) to monitor student achievement. Teachers used these assessments to identify struggling students and adjust their instruction. All the schools followed up by providing extra tutoring for these students.



- Employed some type of coach to help improve academic instruction or leadership. Some had reading coaches; others had coaches focused on leadership or instruction.

There is no simple or single approach to turning around low-performing schools, but we know our strategy needs to be bold and multifaceted. Our strategy also needs to comply with federal law. Thirty-nine of our schools need restructuring according to No Child Left Behind. The U.S. Department of Education is urging districts to implement one of four options:

- **Turnaround.** Replace the principal and at least 50 percent of the staff, adopt new governance, and implement a new or revised instructional program.
- **Restart.** Close the school and restart it under the management of a charter school operator, a charter management organization, or an educational management organization.
- **Close/consolidate.** Closing the school and enrolling the students who attended the school in other, higher-performing schools in the local education agency.
- **Transformation.** Take four steps: (1) Develop teacher and leader effectiveness, (2) create comprehensive instructional programs using student achievement data, (3) extend learning time and create community-oriented schools, and (4) provide operating flexibility and intensive support.

The options that we are actively considering are listed below in the key action steps.

Selecting a strategy, though, is only the beginning. Schools that are working to turn themselves around need focused, consistent support that orchestrates and aligns all central office activity. Our new Office of Innovation and Change will guide our work, across departments, to support our turnaround efforts.

Key action steps:

- **Develop a clear strategy for turning around low-performing schools that uses evidence-based strategies and complies with federal law.** We will use the following steps:
 - **Assess schools** using a combination of test scores and school-based assessments, such as “walkthroughs,” as a first step in developing a turnaround strategy.
 - **Actively engage the community** in assessing the school, informing the choice of turnaround options, and partnering in the school improvement process.
 - **Select major interventions** from among the following choices:
 - *Replacing teachers and/or leadership (reconstitution).* Full reconstitution (replacing all teachers and leadership) has not been shown to be an effective strategy.¹¹ Partial reconstitution, replacing some teachers and/or replacing school leadership, will be used selectively.
 - *Closing a school and reopening the school, often with a specific theme or approach.* One strategy for turning around a school that has been used with some success is closing a low-performing school either completely or grade by grade.

What happens in classrooms between teacher and student is the most critical moment in the delivery of the education service. But the quality of that moment depends entirely on the readiness of the system and the people who are part of it to teach, learn, and act effectively and in accordance with the mission.

— *The Turnaround Challenge*,
Mass Insight Education and
Research Institute (2007)



**Have great expectations.
Believe the school can be
turned around.**

- Community meeting participant, April 30, 2009, meeting, Camden Middle School

**Turnaround strategies require
effective leadership. That’s
critical for creating a safe
environment for learning.**

- Community meeting participant, June 23, 2009, meeting, Science Park High School

Then a new school is introduced that has a theme or different approach. For example, we may consider introducing single-sex schools or schools with specific themes such as technology, arts, or similar topics.

- *Engaging effective universities as a partner.* We will only consider working with universities that have a proven track record in school-based partnerships in Newark or districts similar to Newark. Fortunately, we have longstanding partnerships with many of our area universities.
- *Engaging effective International Knowledge Schools and High-Performing Schools in New Jersey, and/or public charter schools as a partner to help turn around low-performing NPS schools.* With this option, NPS is not considering converting any NPS school into a charter school. Rather, we will explore whether a charter organization is willing to work within the district as a partner.
- *Engaging effective nonprofit school leadership organizations as a partner.* There are nonprofit organizations, some attached to universities, that specialize in helping schools turn around. Sometimes they come in as partners, providing coaches, strategic assistance, and other supports. They also may become a school manager, guiding instruction and, sometimes, operations. Often, these organizations bring particular specialties such as implementing small learning communities or introducing more rigor into teaching and learning. We will carefully consider the choice of any external partner and, as with all choices, consult the community in the decisionmaking process.
- **Create and/or strengthen partnerships** with multiple nonprofit and public agencies that provide additional academic and nonacademic services, supports, and opportunities to students and their families. These partnerships also could include supports for teachers and administrators. Partners could include universities, as well as NTU and CASA.
- **Require external partners to sign a performance contract** that holds them accountable for meeting specific goals.
- **Develop an array of strategies** to support the turnaround effort that includes helping school-level personnel develop the skills to effectively use data and selecting appropriate coaches to assist with teaching and learning.
- **Expand the “Bold Approach” by adding another Children’s Zone** in a partnership with the city of Newark that supports all aspects of human development from preschool through adult literacy. This approach is modeled after the successful Harlem Children’s Zone (details on page 37).
- **Provide oversight of and continuous support** for the low-performing schools and their selected strategies.



We know we are on the right track when:

- All schools that have not met their Annual Yearly Progress goals for five or more years have an aggressive school improvement strategy in place and are showing results.
- One hundred percent of schools are in one of the top three performance tiers by 2013.
- One hundred percent of outside partners have performance contracts that hold them accountable for meeting specific goals.
- A growing percentage of community members are satisfied with the performance of their schools.
- A growing percentage of principals and teachers from the low-performing schools are satisfied with the support they receive from central office and external partners.
- Schools of choice exist throughout the district.
- NPS enrollment increases.

**FOR FIRST-YEAR ACTIONS ON PRIORITY 2, PLEASE
TURN TO PAGE 45.**



PRIORITY 3.

ENSURE THAT SCHOOLS ARE SAFE, WELCOMING, AND WORKING COLLABORATIVELY WITH PARENTS, FAMILIES, AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS TO SUPPORT STUDENT SUCCESS

When you have buy-in from the students and the parents, then students' behavior and attitude about the learning environment improves.

- Community meeting participant, April 29, 2009, meeting, Rafael Hernandez School

Teachers should treat children in their charge as they would want their own children to be treated.

- Community meeting participant, April 27, 2009, meeting, Belmont Runyon School

Administrators need to know the building belongs to the community, not the principal or the teachers.

- Community meeting participant, April 29, 2009, meeting, Rafael Hernandez School

KEY STRATEGIES FOR 2009–13

- Ensure that all students, parents, families, and community members are respected and all schools are safe and “family-friendly.”
- Actively work to help parents and families become more informed and involved.
- Expand and strengthen quality partnerships, including the “full-service community school” model to provide services, supports, and extended learning opportunities for students.

BACKGROUND

Research suggests that family engagement promotes a range of benefits for students, including improved school readiness, higher student achievement, better social skills and behavior, and increased likelihood of high school graduation.¹ A dollar spent on fostering parent and family engagement is a wise investment. For example, schools would have to spend \$1,000 more per pupil to reap the same gains in student achievement that an involved parent brings.²

Talk to almost any educator or review almost any public opinion survey and the response is the same: Parent involvement is a key missing piece in efforts to improve schools. Parent involvement takes many forms: supporting learning at home, helping in the classroom, advocating for improvements, helping to shape decisions. We cannot do this work without parents' active support and participation in all of these roles. To a large degree, the extent of parent involvement is out of our hands; we cannot hold parents accountable in the same way we do staff, students, and vendors. But the good news is that we *can* take some proactive steps to make parents' active participation more likely, starting by making schools safer and more welcoming and by doing a much better job of communicating with parents.

Parents are not the only partners who deserve our greater attention. City agencies, local businesses and universities, and community and faith-based organizations all can provide invaluable supports and extended learning opportunities to our students. We have some excellent partnerships, but going forward it is important to broaden, deepen, and align them with our strategic goals. A particular challenge requires focused attention: Most current NPS partnerships are school-based with little central support and substantial inequities among schools.



None of the work we do with partners and parents will really take hold unless our schools are safe and classrooms are nurturing. Students must be safe on their way to and from school. Teachers and community partners want to work in safe environments. Building a safe school environment means recognizing that some acts of youth misbehavior and/or violence are rooted in traumatic experiences in their homes and neighborhoods and solutions will require a coordinated community approach. This work begins in the home but does not end there. Schools must have clear security plans with monitored entrances and exits, security cameras, and clear sanctions for unacceptable behavior. At the same time, students themselves must become more empowered to take a proactive role in improving school safety.

IMPLEMENTING THE KEY STRATEGIES

A. Ensure that all students, parents, families, and community members are respected and all schools are safe and “family-friendly.”

When schools are family-friendly, families feel welcomed, valued, and connected to each other and to school staff. Parents traded stories at the community meetings, identifying schools that are welcoming and those that are not. This led one participant to recommend, “The district needs to create a blueprint of what parental involvement looks like. Set high expectations across all buildings.” That cannot be done well without parents.

Further, parents should not have to worry whether their sons or daughters are safe — on their way to school or once they arrive. A spring 2008 survey of 1,916 middle grade and high school students from 21 schools by the Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools found that 37.4 percent of students said that “violence in the school” was a “very serious” problem. When asked about “violence in the neighborhood,” 52.6 percent of students indicated it was a “very serious” problem. On the other hand, almost half of the respondents (49.2 percent) said that there was less violence in their school this year compared to last year. And more than a third said the same about their neighborhood.

Our efforts are making a difference, but we have a long way to go. Some schools in Newark and elsewhere are having increasing success by investing more in helping students to keep the peace rather than strategies that are more oriented toward a policing approach. A recent study of New York City schools by the Annenberg Institute for School Reform concluded, “Some schools are recognizing that these (aggressive, impatient, and harsh) methods of discipline are simply ineffective: not only do they fail to correct behavioral issues, they inform a school climate that eclipses a school’s ability to educate students These schools have adopted alternative policies to address safety and discipline that turn around the axis of respect, clarity, and fairness in disciplinary procedures, and expectations of responsibility for student safety on all members of the school community. And these schools are seeing improved student outcomes as a result of their efforts.”³

Family-friendly also means culturally appropriate. A growing number of our families speak a language other than English and bring different cultural values. We will be sensitive and inclusive as we seek to engage all families.

NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR FAMILY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

STANDARD 1: Welcoming all families into the school community — Families are active participants in the life of the school and feel welcomed, valued, and connected to each other, to school staff, and to what students are learning and doing in class.

STANDARD 2: Communicating effectively — Families and school staff engage in regular, two-way, meaningful communication about student learning.

STANDARD 3: Supporting student success — Families and school staff continuously collaborate to support students’ learning and healthy development both at home and at school and have regular opportunities to strengthen their knowledge and skills to do so effectively.

STANDARD 4: Speaking up for every child — Families are empowered to be advocates for their own and other children, to ensure that students are treated fairly and have access to learning opportunities that will support their success.

STANDARD 5: Sharing power — Families and school staff are equal partners in decisions that affect children and families and together inform, influence, and create policies, practices, and programs.

STANDARD 6: Collaborating with community — Families and school staff collaborate with community members to connect students, families, and staff to expanded learning opportunities, community services, and civic participation.

Source: National PTA



96.4% of community meeting participants say schools should provide parents with more reader-friendly information about what their child is supposed to be learning at each grade level and how that learning is measured.

100% of community meeting participants think that schools should provide “customer service” training for all school and central office staff to ensure that parents and families are treated courteously and with respect.

I want to see children, teachers, and administrators succeed. If we start fighting, nothing happens. We need to give each other respect.

— Community meeting participant, June 23, 2009, meeting, Science Park High School

All material should be in the various languages — including parent surveys.

— Community meeting participant, April 29, 2009, meeting, Rafael Hernandez School



Key action steps:

- **Adopt standards of the national PTA and use its implementation guide to ensure every school becomes more family-friendly.** During the 2009–10 school year, every school will be required to engage in the assessment and planning process described in the guide and start work on an action plan.⁴ This implementation guide has been selected because it offers a clear set of metrics and steps toward improving partnerships with families. The standards reflect the work of Joyce Epstein, whose framework NPS has used for years.⁵ By selecting this guide, NPS is not endorsing PTAs; rather, we believe all schools should have a parent organization of its choice.
- **Provide “customer service” training, working with a corporate partner, for all school and central office staff** to ensure that parents and families are treated courteously and with respect.
- **Develop and implement an integrated strategy to foster and maintain safe and positive learning environments in every school.** The strategy will include professional development, a re-examination of security procedures, guidance on effective classroom and school management techniques, and other appropriate interventions for all school-based staff.
- **Educate students, parents, and staff about the new discipline policy** to ensure consistent application, and implement in-school alternative suspensions, peer mediation, and other conflict-resolution programs such as student courts. NPS will implement a youth court to help redirect unacceptable behaviors to affirmative actions for success in life.
- **Appoint an ombudsman** who will partner with parents and legal guardians to address concerns and cultivate relationships and bridge communications between parents and NPS.

We know we are on the right track when:

- Schools whose implementation of family-school partnerships are ranked as “emerging” as measured by the school community’s assessment (using the PTA implementation guide for family-school partnerships) will improve their efforts to “progressing” within one year. For schools ranked as “progressing,” their efforts will improve to “excelling” within two years.
- One hundred percent of schools and departments receive “customer service” training.
- A growing percentage of parents are satisfied with how they are treated by school and central office staff.
- New parents say they feel welcomed.
- There are fewer student suspensions.
- There are fewer student expulsions.
- A growing percentage of staff, parents, and students are satisfied with the level of safety.
- A growing percentage of complaints to the ombudsman are resolved satisfactorily.

B. Actively work to help parents and families become more informed and involved.

All parents, no matter their income level or own educational experience, want their children to succeed. But many do not know what to do. NPS can help, starting by explaining clearly to parents what their children are learning in school, how that learning is measured, how they can help at home, and what they can do if they have concerns. In fact, one of the most consistent requests by parents at the community meetings on the strategic plan was for materials to help explain grade-level standards. Realistically, only a relatively small percentage of parents will elect to get involved beyond supporting their children at home, and that is fine. But for those who do want to help shape decisions, such as school improvement plans and budgets, we need to provide them both the opportunities and training to participate effectively.

Key action steps:

- **Ensure that each school and region and the district has a functioning coalition-building organization such as a PTO, PTA, or School Leadership Council.**
- **Translate all documents for parents and families into at least two languages: Spanish and Portuguese.**
- **Provide parents with more reader-friendly information about what their child is supposed to be learning at each grade level and how that learning is measured.**
- **Give parents more of a meaningful voice on School Leadership Councils and other school advisory committees.** To help set the tone for this new level of engagement, every school will be required to hold a town meeting before February 2010 to discuss its baseline performance data and use that information to discuss school improvement priorities.
- **Create and support regional and district-level School Leadership Councils,** ensuring there are regular meetings where participants openly engage in discussion about how to improve schools. Ensure School Leadership Councils actively involve parents, community members, teachers, support staff, and administrators.
- **Partner with the Abbott Leadership Institute and other community partners** to expand training programs to parents and encourage parental involvement.
- **Ensure that the new principal evaluation system accounts for the level of parent engagement and satisfaction in the school.**

We know we are on the right track when:

- A growing percentage of parents say they receive timely and useful information about the learning standards for their children.
- A growing percentage of School Leadership Councils meet regularly and involve parents as full partners.
- The regional and district-level School Leadership Councils meet regularly, and an increasing percentage of participants are satisfied with the work of the councils.
- All schools have at least one annual town meeting where the school’s performance data are discussed publicly and used to shape school improvement priorities.

Take the meetings outside the school. [Conduct them] at community centers in the neighborhood and at the housing projects.

- Community meeting participant, April 29, 2009, meeting, Rafael Hernandez School

The district needs to create a blueprint of what parental involvement looks like. Set high expectations across all buildings.

- Community meeting participant, April 30, 2009, meeting, Camden Middle School

Young people want opportunities for their voices to be heard in the community.

- Community meeting participant, April 30, 2009, meeting, Camden Middle School

Parents need to help their children understand the different cultures in school, respecting and enjoying one another It should begin at home. Then they can do better with differences in school.

- Community meeting participant, April 30, 2009, meeting, Camden Middle School



100% of community meeting participants think schools should serve as neighborhood centers, working with community partners to provide adult education, job counseling, and similar programs and opportunities for parents and families.

96.6% of community meeting participants say more community partners should be enlisted to provide students with social-emotional supports and health services they need to thrive in the classroom.

Get data on what types of parents are coming out ... to get information on their needs. Then create services/resources for parents in school.

— Community meeting participant, April 30, 2009, meeting, Camden Middle School

- Parents of students with disabilities are satisfied with the instructional and support services for their children in the least restrictive environments.
- Eighty percent of parents are spending three to five hours a week helping their child with homework.
- Eighty percent of parents meet with their child’s teacher(s) four times a year.
- Parents of students in gifted and talented programs are satisfied with opportunities available in each region and school.

C. Expand and strengthen quality partnerships, including the “full-service community school” model to provide services, supports, and extended learning opportunities for students.

Partnerships are critically important to the schools, whether it is a nonprofit organization providing afterschool programming, a business offering volunteers, or an agency delivering mental health services at the school. A school also may partner with a local university to improve teacher professional development and with a major corporation to develop a specialized career academy and real-world internships. Also, some schools actively engage partners not only to support students but to serve adults as well through literacy, computer training, and similar programs. Partners need to be accountable; they must serve the schools’ student achievement goals, not just their own.

There are many names for a school that comprehensively engages outside partners — the most common are “full-service school” or “community school.”⁶ Community schools are being embraced by districts as diverse as Portland, OR, and Chicago, IL, as a strategy to ensure students, especially those who are low income, have the supports they need to learn. When implemented well, research shows community schools can have a significant impact on student success.⁷

Key action steps:

- **Create an Office of Community Partnerships by linking the Office of Extended School Day Programs, Team Newark, and related partnership development and management activities into a combined office.** The new office will be responsible for expanding the pool of partners, ensuring all community partners are accountable for helping students succeed, guiding the development of additional extended learning opportunities for students (such as extracurricular activities and field trips) and adults (such as language or computer classes), and supporting the development of full-service community schools. As part of ensuring programs are accountable, the new office will have the authority to end the relationship with programs that are not effective or move programs to schools where the services would be better utilized.
- **Develop a coherent, school- and student-centered framework for all adults whose primary responsibility is to help children with social and behavioral issues.** This framework will include case management protocols to ensure different providers know how each is supporting particular students; a research-based intervention framework, such as Managing Anti-Social Behavior (MAB) or Response to Intervention (RTI); a review of job descriptions to reduce duplication of effort and increase mutual support; and simplified referral mechanisms.



- **Work with the city and other community institutions to establish additional school-based health clinics, counseling, and similar social services, especially in neighborhoods that are underserved.**
- **Foster the development of full-service community schools**, which provide students with the necessary social-emotional supports and health services they need to thrive in the classroom.
- **Implement “A Broader, Bolder Approach to Education,” an intensive, student-focused effort designed to ensure all children succeed in the area of Newark that includes Central High School and all of its feeder schools.**⁸ This new effort emerged as a result of a partnership with the City of Newark, the state of New Jersey, and New York University. The results-focused effort, which starts with 8th and 9th graders and will expand to other grades in future years, will offer additional professional development for teachers, identify and link community resources to support student success, foster parent and community engagement, and include an emphasis on neighborhood economic development. Many additional Newark partners are joining in this initiative. It is modeled after the successful Harlem Children’s Zone.
- **Strengthen key institutional partnerships with Newark city government; the Newark Schools Research Collaborative led by Rutgers-Newark; and local universities, corporations, hospitals, and nonprofit organizations.**

We know we are on the right track when:

- A growing percentage of students have access to a full array of services and opportunities at full-service community schools and other schools.
- A growing percentage of students and community members have access to school- and community-based health and mental health services.
- More students demonstrate positive behaviors.
- A growing percentage of qualified students have access to high-quality internships, employment, and other business partnerships.
- One hundred percent of external partners have performance contracts that hold them accountable for gains in student learning.
- A growing number of adults from alumni organizations, higher education institutions, faith-based organizations, fraternities, and sororities are recruited to mentor and tutor in our schools.
- A growing percentage of students are satisfied with their extracurricular options.
- The GPA range of high school students participating in sports and other extracurricular activities starts at 2.5.
- Every student in grades 6–12 will have a graduation and exit plan for success.

Implement career centers in all schools for every level and family/community.

— Community meeting participant, May 5, 2009, meeting, Ann Street Elementary School

To parents, we can’t tell our kids to do well in school and fail to support them when they get home. For our kids to excel, we must accept our own responsibilities. That means putting away the Xbox and putting our kids to bed at a reasonable hour. It means attending those parent-teacher conferences, reading to our kids, and helping them with their homework.

— President Barack Obama, July 16, 2009, remarks to NAACP

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PRIORITY 4.

IMPROVE OUR EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE BY CREATING AN ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM THAT PROMOTES DATA-INFORMED, EFFECTIVE, AND EFFICIENT MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS

We need to have more teachers and administrators live in Newark, be part of the community's future, and all work together to work this out.

— Community meeting participant, June 23, 2009, meeting, Science Park High School

Shared success/incentives/rewards create a culture of professionalism and buy-in.

— Community meeting participant, May 5, 2009, meeting, Ann Street Elementary School

KEY STRATEGIES FOR 2009–13

- Reorganize central and regional offices, and streamline operations to strengthen support to schools and students.
- Create a culture of accountability that uses data to inform decisionmaking at every level in support of the district's strategic priorities.
- Increase the transparency of how we make decisions and report on outcomes of our work together.

BACKGROUND

Research, best practices, and good common sense show that for schools to improve, changes must focus on the needs of the children, not the adults. The management and operations of a school system are critical to setting the overall direction and non-negotiable guidelines so all adults focus on outcomes for students.

Further, in every part of the system, it is important to find a balance between clear, centrally driven initiatives and standards, on the one hand, and the autonomy of regional, school, and classroom leaders, on the other hand. In the past, we have not always balanced this tension well, but we are getting better.

Recent audits have found that our system is inefficient. We have too many layers of bureaucracy. A disproportionate share of resources is spent on administration and support services, and not enough is spent on classroom instruction, compared to similar districts. As the table below shows, Newark has comparatively more administrators and support staff than other urban districts.

Newark Has Comparatively More Administrators than Other Urban Districts Percentage of total staff

DISTRICT	ADMINISTRATORS	SUPPORT SERVICES	TEACHERS
NEWARK CITY	12.1%	25.9%	62.0%
Elizabeth City	4.7%	13.0%	82.3%
Jersey City	5.4%	13.4%	81.2%
Paterson	6.1%	13.3%	80.6%
DISTRICT AVERAGE	7.1%	16.4%	76.5%

Source: New Jersey Department of Education Web site, 2009.



We need to change these ratios so that the maximum amount of funding is going to where it will make the most difference — supporting quality instruction in the classroom. Aligning and focusing our work is especially critical as we cope with the fiscal challenges imposed by the economic recession and the recent *Abbott* court decision on school funding, which in time will reallocate millions of dollars away from Newark public schoolchildren.¹

Five elements are key to driving the sustainable change we need: research, data, accountability, policies, and good common sense. They are linked. It is hard to hold people accountable without ready access to data and information that helps them understand how well they are doing. Accountability is more than finger pointing when something goes wrong. A culture of accountability means that each adult and each work team demonstrate the ownership to achieve the desired results — to see the problem, plan a solution, and implement the plan. And a culture of openness with the schools and the community helps build the broad-based understanding, ownership, and trust that are so essential to long-term success.

IMPLEMENTING THE KEY STRATEGIES

A. Reorganize central and regional offices, and align and streamline operations to strengthen support for schools.

In a high-functioning school district, the central office has four primary functions: provide overall leadership and direction, set the performance standards, provide resources and support to schools, and monitor and hold staff accountable for results. Student learning happens in schools and classrooms, which makes it imperative that support from central office be focused on and aligned to each school's improvement plan, which in turn should be aligned with the system's overall priorities.

In our initial strategic planning document, *Moving Forward Together*, we observed: “If principals have to spend most of their time navigating an unresponsive bureaucracy and dealing with endless paperwork, they cannot be the instructional leaders we want them to be. If teachers are battling the human resources department for back pay, they are unlikely to be as focused on excellent instruction as we need them to be. And if parents and community members are not convinced that we are spending their tax dollars cost-effectively, so that the maximum amount of money gets into classrooms, they will be unwilling to continue supporting our work.”²

Recent audits have found that too many NPS initiatives fall short of excellence. Too many efforts are uncoordinated. School requests for information and support often go unanswered. Guidance may be inconsistent or contradictory. For example, the Annenberg Institute for School Reform's 2007 meta-analysis of recent audits found: “Key central office functions are neither aligned nor integrated. Curriculum plans and improvement plans, for example, seem to have been written separately, lack clear benchmarks, don't include using data for instructional improvement, and have few evaluation components. Pacing guides are not aligned with curricula and not linked to state testing. These problems suggest a central office culture which is separated into silos, fragmented, and not coherently working together across divisions and functions.”³

Every administrator, security, support staff, etc. has a mission to improve schools and encourage student achievement.

— Community meeting participant, April 27, 2009, meeting, Belmont Runyon School



After this initial [strategic] planning process, revisit and report back every year.

- Community meeting participant, April 29, 2009, meeting, Rafael Hernandez School

[Provide] incentives for the school for academic gains — shouldn't be just the teachers.

- Community meeting participant, May 5, 2009, meeting, Ann Street Elementary School

Recent research on school management and operations by CGCS found that NPS scores below average (sometimes well below) among big-city school districts in areas ranging from transportation to maintenance costs.⁴ MGT of America recently recommended a series of efficiencies in virtually every NPS department that could save us \$188 million over five years.⁵

Key action steps:

- **Reorganize central office to support improved instruction and school supports.** For example, a new Office of Academic Services will ensure that standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessments are better coordinated and aligned. The new Office of Innovation and Change will help ensure that all departments are “on the same page” in implementing the strategic plan and that NPS is taking advantage of best practices in turning around low-performing schools.
- **Continue to shift more resource teachers to the classroom and ensure that math, literacy, and other instructional coaches are deployed in ways that support school improvement strategies.**
- **Implement additional cost-savings recommendations from the CGCS and MGT audits** by reducing unnecessary staff in areas such as purchasing, human resources, and food service. (See new organizational chart on page 51 of the appendices.)
- **Reorganize schools into four regions, each with its own feeder pattern of Pre-K–12 schools.** This will help ensure coherent and consistent approaches as students move from elementary through high school and into college and work. (See new feeder patterns of schools on page 52 of the appendices.)
- **Reorganize the human resources department to ensure NPS effectively recruits, trains, and retains effective teachers and principals.** We have reorganized into the six standard departments: Organizational Development (which includes recruitment, induction, and employee development), Labor & Employee Relations, Benefits & Compensation, Employee Services, Employee Information, and Risk Management. Top priorities are to build capacity in recruitment, induction, and professional development; develop clear processes to clarify roles and responsibilities (using the Process Classification Framework developed by APQC); and make better use of technology to manage operations.
- **Maximize the effective use of instructional personnel, including having appropriate class sizes and the right number of personal aides.** As part of our review of current class and program offerings (see Priority 1), we will examine if we have too many classes that are too small to justify instructionally or financially. MGT of America, for example, estimates that NPS could save almost \$9 million a year by eliminating only 15 percent of classes with fewer than 15 students (preserving those that need to be small, such as those for special needs children).
- **Reduce the amount of, and better coordinate requests for, information from schools.** Developing a master calendar of reports and increasing the use of Web-based reporting will help free up principals from paperwork burdens that many principals say are excessive, ad hoc, and last minute.
- **Create customer-service processes for each region and the superintendent’s office.**



We know we are on the right track when:

- Central office and regions are reorganized and aligned to focus on supporting schools and students.
- Fewer funds are spent on central administration and support services so that we reach the average for comparable districts by 2013.
- A higher percentage of funds are allocated to classroom instruction so that we reach the state average.
- A growing percentage of school staff rate central office support as “very good” or “excellent.”
- Costs per student are decreased.
- Staff attendance has increased dramatically.

B. Create a culture of accountability that uses data to inform decisionmaking at every level in support of the district’s strategic priorities.

Performance data are critical for day-to-day decisions about policies, programs, and individual students. Teachers and administrators in schools should know how to use the feedback provided to pinpoint areas in need of improvement, get to the root cause of problems, guide resource allocation, and communicate with stakeholders as needed. Useful data help answer critical questions. For example: Did a double block of math actually help improve test scores and understanding?⁶

For data to be used systemwide, data systems must be driven by central office. Yet, in too many situations, NPS either lacks the right information or else does not share it across departments and with schools and the community so that all have timely access. Having good information is only the first step. Knowing how to use it to drive continuous improvement is just as important; thus, we will invest both in building the data infrastructure and training staff to use the information well in their daily work.

Key action steps:

- **Implement a results-focused performance management system for all departments.** A “balanced scorecard” will help every department and staff member see how their work is linked to the strategic plan’s priorities. Weekly, monthly, and annual reporting of results will help monitor progress and hold staff accountable for doing their jobs well. For every job, it is essential that we define effectiveness so that prospective new employees know the level of excellence we are seeking and incumbents know how they will be evaluated.
- **Ensure that all outside vendors are held accountable for meeting the specific goals spelled out in performance contracts.**
- **Build an integrated data warehouse and train staff in how to use the information.** Tools that record and monitor student assessments, student progress, and student guidance will help us better understand when and why students fall off track and pinpoint the most cost-effective interventions.

How do we find out what good teachers are doing?

- Community meeting participant, May 5, 2009, meeting, Ann Street Elementary School

Communication needs to be improved about process and resources.

- Community meeting participant, April 29, 2009, meeting, Rafael Hernandez School



From March to May 2009, MGT of America, Inc., conducted a performance review of NPS' operations in eight areas:

- Central office and school administrative services
- Business office operations, financial management, purchasing, warehousing, payroll, and accounts payable
- Curriculum and instruction, including special programs and services
- Plant operations and management, and facilities needs
- Transportation
- Information technology
- Safety and security
- Food services

Its findings and recommendations were based on a review of more than 100 documents and data files, onsite interviews, visits to 21 schools, an online survey of administrators and teachers, and a "peer review" that compared NPS to Elizabeth, Jersey City, and Paterson public schools. The full report can be found at www.nps.k12.nj.us.

- **Integrate the use of data into all professional development and capacity-building efforts.** As discussed in Priority 1, all teacher and principal development will be customized to the specific learning needs of their students. If the data show that a class or whole school is lagging in fractions, for instance, fractions will be the focus of workshops and in-class coaching. Meanwhile, results from the balanced scorecard will drive all central office training.
- **Expand usage of analytical and reporting tools such as the "instructional walkthroughs" and School Quality Reviews.** These qualitative analyses will supplement and enrich the information that comes from standardized test scores and other "hard data." Cambridge Education already has conducted in-depth School Quality Reviews of 18 schools, and the remaining schools will be assessed during 2009–10.
- **Engage the Newark Schools Research Collaborative in research projects that inform and strengthen our educational practice.** Having external partners helps ensure the independence and credibility of our research while allowing more in-depth and long-term analyses than has been possible otherwise.

We know we are on the right track when:

- One hundred percent of schools, departments, and staff have developed performance measures that are aligned with the strategic plan.
- One hundred percent of schools, departments, and staff are reviewing their balanced scorecard monthly and improving areas where targets are not being met.
- One hundred percent of employees have goals aligned with their department's or school's balanced scorecard; they review these goals quarterly with their supervisor.
- One hundred percent of employees have an employee development plan, aligned with their department's or school's balanced scorecard, which they review quarterly with their supervisor.
- One hundred percent of schools have an in-depth School Quality Review by the end of 2009–10 school year.

C. Increase the transparency of how we make decisions and report on our outcomes.

Stakeholders inside and outside the system have a right to know our goals and strategic priorities and how effectively we are implementing them. Making data and information easily accessible and widely available allows the public to hold us accountable. Providing opportunities for participation in key decisions strengthens both understanding and ownership of the results.



Throughout the strategic planning process, however, we heard repeatedly from principals, teachers, parents and guardians, and community members that they were “in the dark,” unaware of key initiatives and programs. Further, when they had some level of awareness of specific activities, they often were not clear how those connected to the bigger picture. Having a strategic plan is an important step. Going forward, a top priority now is to make sure all stakeholders are on the same page about our strategic priorities, understand how they fit in, and are kept up to date on our progress in implementing the actions described in these pages.

Key action steps:

- **Publish annual reader-friendly report cards for every school that provide information on student achievement, teaching quality, and other key aspects of school performance.**
- **Publish results from the balanced scorecard**, which will monitor how effectively we implement these strategic priorities.
- **Provide more regular and timely information to parents and community members through a more interactive Web site and the development and implementation of voicemail, e-mail, and text-message systems.** Among other features, this will allow parents and guardians to regularly check on the progress of their students.

We know we are on the right track when:

- A growing percentage of parents and guardians and the community use the new reporting tools (interactive Web site, e-mail, and text-message systems).
- A growing percentage of parents and community members are satisfied with the level of information they have received.
- A growing number of other school districts acknowledge they are learning from NPS.
- Parents share their knowledge with each other about the information received from NPS.
- NPS is the school district of choice for the students and families of Newark.

The United States, meanwhile, faces a curricular challenge, despite its early recognition of the need for ICT (information and communications technology) education. While we attempt to ensure that every American child has a quality education in the traditional basic subjects, other countries have recalibrated their educational institutions to respond differently to the challenge of learning for the 21st century.

— *ICT Fluency and High Schools*, The National Academies Press (2006)

FOR FIRST-YEAR ACTIONS ON PRIORITY 4, PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 47.



APPENDICES

DEVELOPING YEAR 1 ACTION PRIORITIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Priority 1. Ensure highly effective teachers and principals deliver strong curriculum, instruction, and assessment

First-Year Actions

	RESPONSIBLE
A. Strengthen and align curriculum with rigorous standards, ensuring that it is engaging, challenging, and consistently implemented.	
Conduct inventory of current curriculum materials — including curriculum frameworks, pacing guides, lesson plans — to ensure they are aligned with state standards, engaging, and relevant.	Academic Services
Distribute aligned and high-quality curriculum materials to all principals, vice principals, department chairs, and teachers.	Academic Services
Work with teams of effective teachers and NTU to develop new materials, as needed. These will include “curriculum maps” that ensure curriculum alignment from grade to grade.	Academic Services
Create and fully staff standalone offices of language arts and literacy, social studies, and world language as part of the reorganization of central office.	Academic Services
Begin administering the quarterly interim assessments in language arts literacy, math, and science.	Planning, Evaluation, and Testing
Begin administering college placement test to all students at the end of their junior year.	Planning, Evaluation, and Testing
Evaluate all high school course offerings (including vocational programs) to ensure that they are aligned with current postsecondary expectations, and eliminate those that are not.	Academic Services
Review student promotion policies and align with college- and work-readiness expectations.	Academic Services
Ensure that all teachers in grades 3–8 provide additional research and independent study projects for “advanced” students.	Academic Services
Begin implementing recommendations of MGT of America to strengthen special education services.	Special Education
Establish quantitative performance indicators as part of developing the “balanced scorecard,” and begin collecting baseline data as needed.	Office of the Superintendent
B. Create a highly effective professional development system for teachers and administrators that is more focused on delivering quality instruction and aligned to the learning needs of each student.	
Develop a comprehensive strategy for creating a highly effective professional development system that uses best practices and is integrated with NPS assessment frameworks for teachers and principals.	Academic Services
Ensure that all staff members (central office and school-based) are aligning policies, procedures, and activities with the strategic plan.	Office of the Superintendent
Revamp the training for all principals and vice principals to focus on three areas: (1) teaching standards-based curriculum, (2) using student performance data, and (3) conducting teacher evaluations.	Professional Development, with support from CASA
Train the regional superintendents and principals how to use the new evaluation tools.	Professional Development, with support from CASA
Develop and publicize a comprehensive, year-long professional development calendar for district-provided trainings.	Professional Development
Evaluate all contracts with external professional development providers to ensure that they are performance-based. Renegotiate, as feasible.	Professional Development, the School Business Administrator, General Counsel
Work with NTU and CASA to plan and begin after-school and weekend professional development institutes on high-priority topics.	Professional Development
Establish quantitative performance indicators as part of developing the “balanced scorecard,” and begin collecting baseline data as needed.	Office of the Superintendent



C. Ensure there is a highly effective teacher in every classroom and a highly effective principal in every school by strengthening the preparation, recruitment, induction, evaluation, recognition, and compensation of effective teachers and principals.	
Recruit and hire a senior leader to strengthen our recruitment and hiring practices as part of the overall reorganization of the human resources department.	Human Resources
Articulate performance metrics for principal and teacher hires.	Human Resources
Develop clear processes that clarify roles and responsibilities in all key functional areas (instructional and operational).	Human Resources
Ensure that all human resources staff better understand how to use PeopleSoft system to conduct their work.	Human Resources
Partner with NTU to continue implementing and monitoring the new three-tier process for addressing “unsatisfactory” teacher evaluations.	Academic Services, Labor Relations
Develop and administer an annual “school climate and working conditions” survey to principals, teachers, and staff, and use the results as part of principal and teacher evaluations.	Communications, Human Resources
Shape professional development, recognition, and compensation using student achievement gains, in partnership with NTU and CASA.	Human Resources; Labor Relations; Planning, Evaluation and Testing
Work with NTU to develop a strategy to create incentives for highly effective teachers to move to high-poverty, low-performing schools.	Human Resources, Labor Relations
Establish quantitative performance indicators as part of developing the “balanced scorecard,” and begin collecting baseline data as needed.	Office of the Superintendent

Priority 2. Build a system of great schools that serve students, their families, and the community

First-Year Actions

	RESPONSIBLE
A. Build an aligned, supportive Pre-K–grade 3 pipeline that ensures students are ready for kindergarten, reading by grade 3, and prepared to move forward.	
Establish a collaborative working group for all preschool providers, including NPS, to develop a SY 2009–10 work plan that includes developing a communitywide, streamlined system of entry for all preschool services and a strategy to operationalize Pre-K–3 alignment.	Early Childhood Education, Innovation and Change, Academic Services
Assess the need for additional kindergarten classrooms and open new classrooms, as needed, for SY 2010–11.	Academic Services
Increase the number of ECERS examinations so all classrooms are inspected at least every two years. The focus will be on classrooms that scored 4 or lower in the past.	Early Childhood Education
Establish quantitative performance indicators as part of developing the “balanced scorecard,” and begin collecting baseline data as needed.	Office of the Superintendent
B. Transform the middle grades experience to ensure students are prepared for high school — academically, socially, and emotionally.	
Develop a clear, comprehensive strategy for all middle grades schools and publicize to the community.	Innovation and Change
Provide an initial round of intensive training for all middle grades principals and vice principals.	Professional Development
Expand the interdisciplinary curriculum to all middle grades programs.	Academic Services
Develop and implement strategy so that all middle grades schools are starting a grade-by-grade implementation of advisories.	Academic Services
Establish quantitative performance indicators as part of developing the “balanced scorecard,” and begin collecting baseline data as needed.	Office of the Superintendent



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C. Dramatically transform our high schools, building a system of themed, college- and career-oriented schools that ensure all students graduate prepared for college, work, and citizenship.	
Convene a stakeholder-based planning group to develop a high school transformation strategy that includes guidance for every high school and a strategy to increase choice for students.	Innovation and Change
Continue implementation of the Alternative High School Initiative.	Alternative Education
Complete the data analysis to better understand the population of "over-age and under-credited" students and develop a multiple pathways strategy to address their needs.	Innovation and Change, Planning, Evaluation, and Testing
Convene all college access providers that serve NPS students and other stakeholders to develop a comprehensive college awareness strategy that starts in the middle grades and continues to graduation.	Innovation and Change, Student Services
Establish quantitative performance indicators as part of developing the "balanced scorecard," and begin collecting baseline data as needed.	Office of the Superintendent
D. Implement an aggressive strategy for turning around low-performing schools that includes reconstitution, external partnerships, full-service "community schools," and other effective strategies.	
Initiate a community consultation process at every school in the bottom two tiers (Consistently Struggling, Chronically Failing).	Innovation and Change, regional superintendents
Develop a turnaround strategy for implementation in SY 2010-11 for every school in the bottom two tiers (Consistently Struggling, Chronically Failing).	Innovation and Change, regional superintendents
Develop additional strategies to support turnaround schools, including expanding partnerships, support for using data, and a school coaching strategy.	Innovation and Change, regional superintendents
Establish quantitative performance indicators as part of developing the "balanced scorecard," and begin collecting baseline data as needed.	Office of the Superintendent

Priority 3. Ensure that schools are safe, welcoming, and working collaboratively with parents, families, and community partners to support student success

First-Year Actions

	RESPONSIBLE
A. Ensure that all students, parents, families, and community members are respected and all schools are safe and family-friendly.	
Every school will complete the assessment process of their parent and family engagement strategies using the National PTA guide, develop an action plan to strengthen efforts, and begin implementing the plan.	Regional superintendents
Begin conducting an annual satisfaction survey of all parents, families, and students.	Communications, ombudsman
Select a vendor and pilot "customer service" training with a small number of schools and offices. Once the pilot training is completed, the program will be revised based on feedback and reach all employees by 2010.	Office of the Superintendent, Human Resources
Develop and implement an integrated strategy to foster and maintain safe and positive learning environments in every school. The strategy shall include professional development, a re-examination of security procedures, guidance on effective classroom and school management techniques, and other appropriate steps for all school-based staff.	Student Services, School Security
Educate students, parents, and staff about the new discipline policy to ensure uniform application and implement in-school alternative suspensions, peer mediation, and other conflict resolution programs such as student courts.	Student Services
Establish the process for tracking and resolving initial complaints referred to the new ombudsman.	Ombudsman
Establish quantitative performance indicators as part of developing the "balanced scorecard," and begin collecting baseline data as needed.	Office of the Superintendent



B. Actively work to help parents and families become more informed and involved.	
Examine which documents are not translated into Spanish and Portuguese and develop a strategy to ensure all significant documents are translated by January 2010. The focus will be on schools where parents speak Spanish and Portuguese.	Communications, Bilingual Education
Publish guides on what students should be learning in kindergarten through 3rd grade. Publish guides for higher grades in the following school year.	Academic Services
Every school will hold a town meeting by December 2009 to review each school's performance data, provide planning guidance for school improvement teams, recruit parents for school activities, and strengthen guidance to ensure parents are more involved for SY 2010–11.	Regional Superintendents
Convene a planning process with the Abbott Leadership Institute and other organizations that provide or seek to provide training for parents. The planning process will develop a strategy to reach more parents. The planning process also will include representatives from our parent liaison staff.	Communications, Academic Services
Establish quantitative performance indicators as part of developing the "balanced scorecard," and begin collecting baseline data as needed.	Office of the Superintendent
C. Expand and strengthen quality partnerships, including the "full-service community school" model to provide services, supports, and extended learning opportunities for students.	
Lay the foundation for creating an Office of Community Partnerships in SY 2010–11 by creating collaborative frameworks among the Office of Extended Learning and TEAM Newark, conducting a census of partners currently in the schools, and developing protocols to ensure all school partners are aligned with school goals and to provide superior programming.	Office of the Superintendent, Safe and Drug Free Schools, Extended Learning
Develop a community school framework in partnership with potential partners, including Newark City Government and appropriate nonprofit service providers. Create a school-based planning process for building a community school and invite up to five schools to apply in SY 2010–11.	Innovation and Change
Implement first-year plans for the Bolder Approach initiative involving Central High School and its feeder schools.	Innovation and Change
Establish quantitative performance indicators as part of developing the "balanced scorecard," and begin collecting baseline data as needed.	Office of the Superintendent

Priority 4. Improve our educational practice by creating an accountability system that promotes data-informed, effective, and efficient management and operations

First-Year Actions

	RESPONSIBLE
A. Reorganize central and regional offices, and streamline operations to strengthen support to schools and students.	
Implement the new central office reorganization, including establishing a new Office of Innovation and Change and a revamped academic services office.	Office of the Superintendent, Innovation and Change
Review cost-savings recommendations from the MGT of America audit, and include the highest-priority suggestions in the FY 2010–11 budget.	Budget Administrator and relevant offices
Monitor the reorganization of schools into four regions to ensure increased coherence as students move through the grades.	Academic Services
Reorganize the human resources department, and bolster staff capacity.	Human Resources



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B. Create a culture of accountability that uses data to inform decisionmaking at every level in support of the district's strategic priorities.

Review and refine the School Improvement Planning template to ensure it supports and aligns with the school improvement strategies in the strategic plan, with particular emphasis on professional development, strategies to support steps toward higher tiers, and more effective partnering with organizations providing services and supports to students.	Academic Services, Office of Innovation and Change
Develop performance measures for each department that are aligned to the strategic plan. Collect baseline data as needed.	Office of the Superintendent, Innovation and Change
Provide regular public reports on the progress in implementing strategic plan priorities.	Communications, Innovation and Change
Publish a "balanced scorecard" that will document how successfully every department is meeting its annual performance goals.	Communications, Innovation and Change
Streamline and coordinate paperwork requests from central office to schools by developing a master calendar of key reporting deadlines and increasing the use of online reporting tools to simplify the process.	Academic Services, Innovation and Change
Work with all offices and departments to develop performance-based contracts for all external vendors of products and services.	General Counsel, School Business Administrator, Innovation and Change
Phase in the use of new data tools and provide ongoing professional development to ensure that staff know how to use them. (Naviance college counseling system used in grades 8–12 by second semester; SchoolNet student performance tracking system by Winter 2010; and PowerSchool student information system by SY 2010–11).	Information Technology
Conduct a second year of "instructional walkthroughs" in each school.	Academic Services
Cambridge Education completes School Quality Reviews of all schools.	Academic Services
Newark Schools Research Collaborative develops a three-year research plan.	Planning, Evaluation, and Testing

C. Increase the transparency of how we make decisions and report on the outcomes of our work together.

Meet regularly with all major stakeholder groups (mayor, city council, unions, Newark Alliance, etc.) to update them on implementation of the strategic plan.	Office of the Superintendent
Use the new performance indicators to develop a "balanced scorecard" for each school and department, which will allow ongoing internal monitoring of progress.	Office of the Superintendent, Innovation and Change
Publish annual reader-friendly report cards for each school and the district as a whole.	Planning, Evaluation, and Testing
Develop a more information-rich and interactive Web site to keep staff, parents, students, and the public more regularly informed.	Communications, Information Technology
Roll out new voicemail, e-mail, and text-messaging system to improve outreach to staff and parents.	Communications



ACHIEVEMENT TRENDS, 2005–09

GRADE 3	2005		2006		2007		2008		2009	
	LAL	Math	LAL	Math	LAL	Math	LAL	Math	LAL	Math
All Students	58.3	62.9	58.6	68.7	63.1	69.8	68.8	69.4	40.4	52.2
Black	53.5	57.2	52.8	62.7	57.3	63.1	63.2	61.5	30.0	40.6
Hispanic	59.7	65.9	62.0	72.3	67.4	75.2	73.6	76.5	51.8	65.3
White	83.4	87.4	87.4	93.6	82.8	90.2	84.8	91.3	69.3	79.4
Special Education	13.3	36.2	17.6	38.5	27.1	40.8	30.0	46.2	15.6	33.2
Limited English Proficient	52.1	64.7	52.7	69.1	63.0	73.6	69.0	76.5	46.8	60.6
Female	65.5	66.0	66.8	70.6	68.4	73.1	74.9	72.4	44.7	54.0
Male	51.6	59.9	50.9	66.9	57.8	66.6	62.6	66.2	36.9	50.8

GRADE 5	2006		2007		2008		2009	
	LAL	Math	LAL	Math	LAL	Math	LAL	Math
All Students	62.8	57.9	66.0	61.2	32.2	53.1	39.4	58.5
Black	58.0	50.6	60.1	54.7	23.3	42.7	30.3	46.6
Hispanic	64.0	61.1	70.4	65.3	38.7	60.7	45.5	67.4
White	83.8	85.4	87.6	85.1	63.8	90.7	67.7	90.2
Special Education	20.4	23.0	25.7	29.6	8.2	27.0	12.4	31.0
Limited English Proficient	41.6	48.9	66.3	60.0	27.9	51.9	31.3	56.2
Female	68.7	62.8	71.0	65.9	37.6	57.0	45.4	61.8
Male	57.2	53.1	61.7	57.1	27.7	49.9	33.9	55.5

GRADE 8	2005		2006		2007		2008		2009	
	LAL	Math	LAL	Math	LAL	Math	LAL	Math	LAL	Math
All Students	47.0	30.3	44.9	31.2	49.9	35.3	56.3	37.2	55.8	41.8
Black	42.4	21.9	40.1	22.7	44.5	27.9	50.0	28.6	48.1	29.6
Hispanic	51.0	38.4	47.6	37.4	53.7	40.4	62.3	43.6	60.7	51.8
White	72.7	65.3	71.4	68.6	77.6	74.2	80.4	73.8	84.3	75.8
Special Education	12.2	6.7	12.3	9.6	13.0	7.7	19.0	9.6	18.7	7.9
Limited English Proficient	30.9	25.7	22.8	24.7	38.4	27.8	47.7	35.0	46.6	42.7
Female	56.3	32.7	54.6	33.2	61.5	38.8	64.4	38.2	64.5	43.1
Male	38.3	28.0	36.0	29.4	39.5	32.2	49.0	36.4	47.6	40.8

GRADE 11	2005		2006		2007		2008		2009	
	LAL	Math	LAL	Math	LAL	Math	LAL	Math	LAL	Math
All Students	52.5	37.4	53.6	40.4	58.3	39.7	51.1	40.3	54.7	42.6
Black	51.9	32.9	51.9	33.9	56.2	32.4	49.5	33.5	50.9	35.9
Hispanic	49.5	39.4	51.0	44.8	57.4	48.4	49.4	45.2	56.6	49.3
White	69.6	63.2	75.2	76.6	77.3	67.7	71.7	82.6	78.4	72.5
Special Education	11.4	6.7	10.3	4.9	12.1	4.6	9.1	7.0	14.5	7.5
Limited English Proficient	10.4	21.1	25.2	42.2	27.8	36.3	18.9	40.1	22.1	23.1
Female	58.1	36.8	59.6	41.6	65.2	40.6	60.5	42.3	60.1	42.9
Male	46.2	38.1	46.4	39.0	50.1	38.7	41.0	38.0	48.2	42.2

Note: LAL = language arts literacy. Testing data come from the New Jersey Department of Education, which has been phasing in more challenging assessments. That helps explain the sharp declines in some subjects in some years — for example, between 2008 and 2009 in LAL and math.



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

Context Standards

- Organizes adults into learning communities whose goals are aligned with those of the school and district.
- Requires skillful school and district leaders who guide continuous instructional improvement.
- Requires resources to support adult learning and collaboration.

Process Standards

- Uses disaggregated student data to determine adult learning priorities, monitor progress, and help sustain continuous improvement.
- Uses multiple sources of information to guide improvement and demonstrate its impact.
- Prepares educators to apply research to decisionmaking.
- Uses learning strategies appropriate to the intended goal.
- Applies knowledge about human learning and change.
- Provides educators with the knowledge and skills to collaborate.

Content Standards

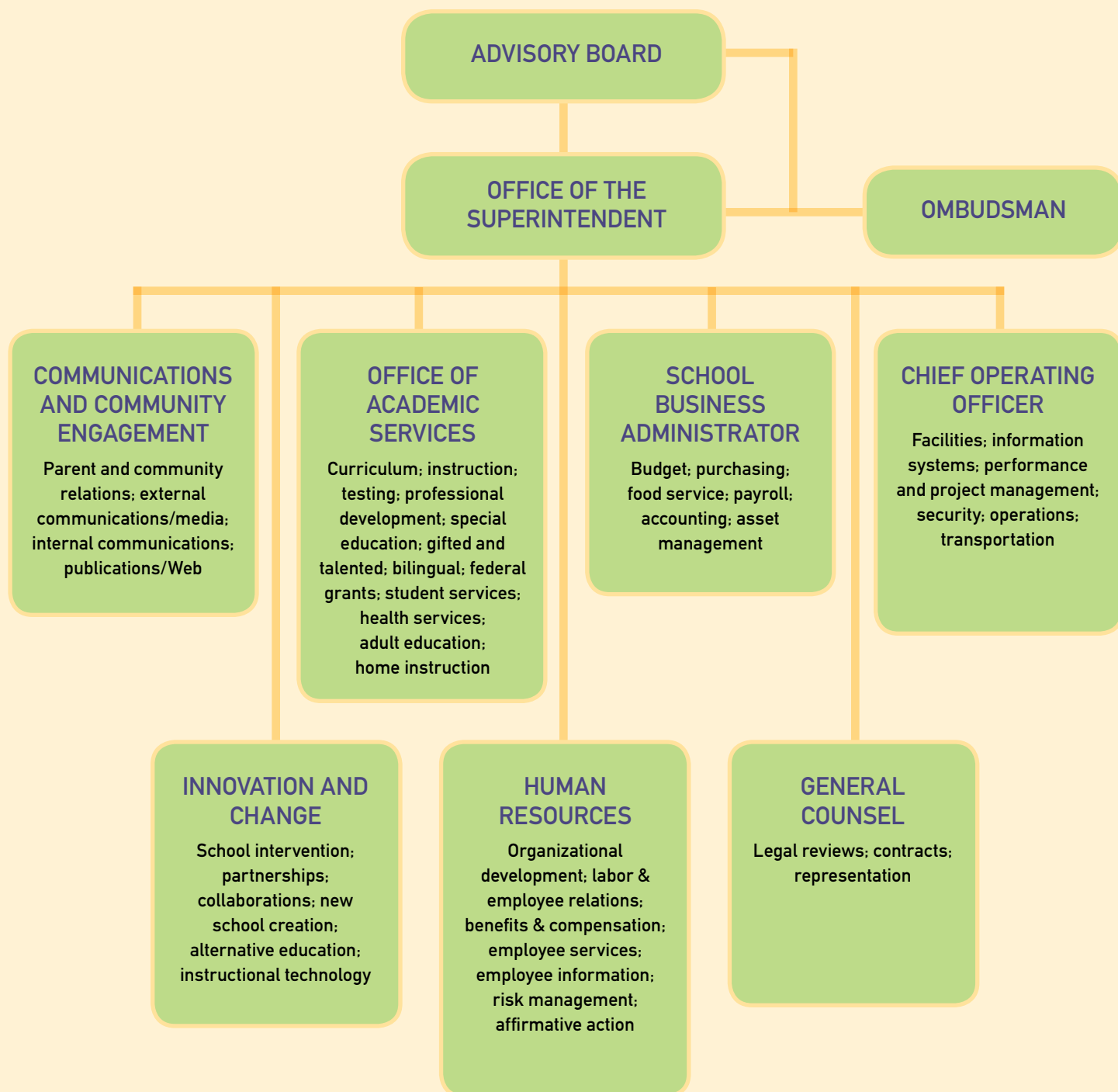
- Prepares educators to understand and appreciate all students; create safe, orderly, and supportive learning environments; and hold high expectations for their academic achievement.
- Deepens educators' content knowledge, provides them with research-based instructional strategies to assist students in meeting rigorous academic standards, and prepares them to use various types of classroom assessments appropriately.
- Provides educators with knowledge and skills to involve families and other stakeholders appropriately.

Extracted August 15, 2009, from www.nsd.org/standards/.



REORGANIZING CENTRAL OFFICE

A key part of our reform is reorganizing and streamlining central office, which will provide more instructional coherence and operational efficiencies. To reinforce the premium we place on academics, the four regional superintendents will work under the Office of Academic Services, and school principals will report to the regional superintendents. The creation of regions is described in Priority 4.



REGIONS AND HIGH SCHOOL CLUSTERS/FEEDER PATTERNS

To ensure greater coherence, consistency, and accountability, starting in the 2009-10 school year, NPS reorganized into four regions. Each region has one or more comprehensive high schools, each with a cluster or feeder pattern of schools serving children from preschool through grade 8. In addition, each region has one or more specialized high schools and three regions have ungraded schools.

NORTH REGION

Barringer High School Cluster

9-12
Barringer High School

Pre-K-8
McKinley
Rafael Hernandez
Abington Avenue
First Avenue

K-8
Dr. E. Alma Flagg
Dr. Wm. Horton
Ridge Street

Pre-K-4
Branch Brook
Roberto Clemente
Elliott Street

K-4
Franklin
Roseville Avenue
Broadway

5-8
L. Munoz Marin

Specialized High Schools
Science Park High School

SOUTH REGION

Shabazz High School Cluster

9-12
Malcolm X. Shabazz

Pre-K-4
Belmont Runyon

Pre-K-8
Dayton Street
LA Spencer
Miller Street
Peshine Avenue

K-8
Avon Avenue

Pre-K-5
Madison Avenue

Pre-K
Clinton Avenue

Weequahic High School Cluster

9-12
Weequahic High School

Pre-K-8
George W. Carver

K-8
Bragaw Avenue
Chancellor Avenue
Hawthorne Avenue
Maple Avenue

Ungraded
Bruce Street

Specialized High Schools
Arts High School
Technology High School

EAST AND CENTRAL REGIONS

Central High School Cluster

9-12
Central High School

Pre-K-8
Burnet Street
Cleveland
Eighteenth Avenue
Newton Street
Quitman Street
Sussex Avenue

East Side High School Cluster

9-12
East Side High School

Pre-K-8
Lafayette Street
Hawkins Street
Ann Street
Oliver Street

K-8
Wilson Avenue

K-5
South Street

Ungraded
Samuel L. Berliner

Specialized High Schools
American History High School
Newark Vocational

WEST REGION

West Side High School Cluster

9-12
West Side High School

Pre-K-8
Lincoln
Mt. Vernon
S. Seventeenth Street
Thirteenth Avenue

K-8
Alexander Street
Dr. M. L. King
Fifteenth Avenue
Ivy Hill

Pre-K-4
Camden Elementary
Harriet Tubman

K-4
Fourteenth Avenue
Speedway Avenue

5-8
Camden Middle

Pre-K-K
Boylan Street

Ungraded
John F. Kennedy

Specialized High Schools
Academy of Vocational Careers
Newark Evening
NJ Regional Day
University High



RAISING THE BAR FOR ALL SCHOOLS

As part of building a system of great schools, we have developed a typology of schools, a way of categorizing our schools, to ensure all are on the right path. By 2013, all of our schools need to be in the top three tiers. Schools that are not will be subject to increasing interventions until they turn the corner. Schools that are succeeding will have increasing levels of autonomy. School status as of September 2009:

Tier 1: International Knowledge Schools

Comparable to the finest public schools in the world

There are no schools currently in this tier.

Tier 2: High-Performing Schools

Comparable to the finest public schools in the state

Abington Avenue	Roseville Avenue
Ann Street	Science Park HS
Lafayette Street	Technology HS
Roberto Clemente	University HS

Tier 3: Rapidly Improving Schools

On their way to becoming high-performing schools

Alexander Street	Fourteenth Avenue	Mt. Vernon
American History HS	Franklin	Ridge Street
Arts HS	Harriet Tubman	Wilson Avenue
Branch Brook	Ivy Hill	
First Avenue	Lincoln	

Tier 4: Consistently Struggling Schools

Where most students struggle to achieve proficiency, gains are inconsistent, and performance has not substantially increased

AVC HS	Dr. Wm. Horton	Madison Avenue	Samuel L. Berliner
Broadway	Eighteenth Avenue	Maple Avenue	South 17th Street
Burnet Street	Elliott Street	McKinley	South Street
Camden Elem.	Fifteenth Avenue	Miller Street	Speedway Avenue
Camden Middle	Hawkins Street	Newark Voc. HS	Sussex Avenue
Chancellor Avenue	Hawthorne Avenue	Newton Street	
Cleveland	L. Munoz Marin	Oliver Street	

Tier 5: Chronically Failing Schools

Where most students do not achieve basic proficiency

Avon Avenue	Central HS	East Side HS	Peshine Avenue	Weequahic HS
Barringer HS	Dayton Street	George W. Carver	Quitman Street	West Side HS
Belmont Runyon	Dr. E. Alma Flagg	L. A. Spencer	Rafael Hernandez	
Bragaw Avenue	Dr. M. L. King	Malcolm X. Shabazz HS	Thirteenth Avenue	



BRIGHT SPOTS

Two recent audits of NPS schools, one by Cambridge Education focused on the instructional program in 18 schools and one by MGT of America focused on the school district's operations, found numerous areas of strength. Going forward, we intend to build on these bright spots.

Excerpts from *Meta-Analysis of Newark School Reviews, Spring 2009, Cambridge Education*

Reviewers from Cambridge Education visited 18 NPS schools during March, April, and May 2009 to evaluate progress in six domains. Following the review, each school was provided with an individual report describing strengths and areas for improvement, overall and within each domain. The meta-analysis, excerpted below, provided a general overview of schools' successes and areas for improvement.

Domain 1: Student Achievement and Progress

Although University HS has the advantage of student selection and thus would be expected to perform highly, good systems are in place to monitor student progress and to provide interventions and support whenever appropriate. Examples include addressing identified weaknesses in writing and comprehension skills for some student groups and providing summer bridging classes for struggling mathematicians. Flagg school uses technology effectively to analyze data and monitor student progress and has a strong focus on gifted and talented students. Clemente has established good systems for progress monitoring for all students and is particularly strong in ensuring that the specific needs of English language learners and special education students are identified and addressed. Technology HS has demonstrated significant improvement in student achievement since implementing student tracking for all subjects, alongside goal-setting strategies.

Domain 2: Quality of Learning, Teaching, and Assessment

The use of learning objectives is well developed at University HS. They provide high challenge, are clearly understood by the students, and are used well by teachers to check understanding.

Flagg, Hawkins, and Clemente have developed good rubrics and use them well to aid teaching, learning, and assessment.

Domain 3: Curriculum

The main variations among schools are evident in the range of electives and enrichment opportunities that are available to students, alongside the effectiveness of pacing guides and vertical alignment between grades to ensure appropriate knowledge and skills development. In Technology HS, for example, department chairs have a clear role and responsibility in ensuring tight curriculum alignment and pacing in their subjects, and this is having a positive impact on student achievement. Avon, Clemente, and University all monitor and pace their curriculum carefully.

High expectations for both teacher and student performance is a major influence on school improvement and success. Strongest in this respect are Spencer, East Side, Flagg, and University schools in which administrators regularly share high expectations with the whole school community to good effect.

Domain 4: Leadership, Management, and Use of Data

Flagg, University HS, Clemente, and Technology HS have all been very successful in this respect. In all four schools, good collaboration between administrators and staff results in staff ownership of school goals and targets and consistency in application of procedures.

Clemente has the strongest systems for data analysis and use. Administrators rigorously analyze a wide range of data and information to identify patterns and trends in performance, comparing different subgroup achievements carefully to focus on specific needs. This information is then shared and discussed with the staff, with interventions and support provided wherever necessary.



Domain 5: School Culture

In most schools, effective relationships are evident between staff and students and between students and their peers. The best schools in this domain are University HS, Hawkins, and Clemente. In these schools, clear and consistently applied policies and procedures result in high expectations by staff and the students for themselves; strong commitment and pride; a positive and supportive learning environment; and many opportunities for students to have a voice, take responsibility, and show initiative.

Domain 6: Links with Parents and the Community

The strongest parental links, characterized by positive relationships and good attendance at meetings and workshops, are at three schools: Thirteenth Avenue, Clemente, and Oliver Street. At each of these schools, very effective relationships between home and school are evident with open and welcoming cultures in which parental views are sought and acted upon either through liaison officers or PTAs, and each school provides many opportunities to recognize and celebrate success and achievement.

Excerpts from *Operational Performance Review of Newark Public Schools, July 31, 2009, MGT of America, Inc.*

In spring-summer 2009, MGT of America conducted an extensive audit to help the district increase the efficiency and effectiveness of its operations and boost public confidence that tax dollars are being spent wisely. As part of the audit, the company identified 47 practices worthy of commendation, including the following:

Central Office and School Administrative Services

Important standing committees provide collaborative forums for board input and two-way communications between the board and administration.

Human Resource Services

Use of the grievance procedure process helps avoid costly arbitration processes and keeps the number and severity of grievances at low levels.

A comprehensive supervisory training program for noninstructional employees advancing into leadership positions.

Financial Management and Operations

A Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting from ASBO for the June 30, 2008, Comprehensive Annual Financial Report.

Reductions in annual workers' compensation claims, the severity of these claims, and the overall cost to NPS.

The free and reduced lunch incentive program has increased the number of students from NPS qualifying for these services and reduced the amount of the budget supplement for Food Services by \$3,000,000.

The financial incentives offered to school administrators for establishing procedures to maximize the attendance of classroom teachers.

Education Service Delivery

Commitment to create and sustain a system of high-performing schools.

Provision of comprehensive health services to students throughout the district.

The Newark-Alternative High School Initiative Partnership is commended for its concentrated effort to reduce dropout rates and increase graduation rates by developing student-centered secondary schools throughout Newark.



Facility Operations and Management

A best practice facilities management department to provide a full range of services to all schools.

A best practice energy management program.

Transportation

Principals and vice principals rated the services provided to them by the department of transportation, and the department leadership in particular, as excellent.

Information Technology

Effective practices to ensure technology-related purchases are pre-approved to eliminate incompatibility issues.

A creative and award-winning communication tool to allow parents and students access to up-to-date information from teachers and the district.

Safety and Security

The division of security services has developed an extraordinarily effective relationship with the Newark Police Department.

Exemplary emergency response planning and training.

Food Services

The practice of providing breakfast meals to children at no cost is a public service that benefits the community and results in increased student participation.

Copies of complete audits are available at www.nps.k12.nj.us.



ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE

In the past year we have undertaken numerous initiatives that have produced short-term results as well as laid the foundation for future gains. Highlights include:

- Reorganized into four regional districts, with each high school having coherent clusters/feeder patterns of elementary and middle grades schools.
- Worked closely with the city to transform our alternative high schools into beacons of hope for the many students who have dropped out or are about to. The first schools opened in September 2009.
- Opened an Early College High School to provide accelerated learning opportunities to middle grades students. The first 75 6th graders started classes in September 2009.
- Collaborated with NTU on an innovative approach for supporting and/or dismissing ineffective teachers, which we believe can serve as a national model.
- Started to use powerful new software tools for tracking student achievement, curriculum and instructional management, and guidance counseling and career awareness.
- Established a ground-breaking research partnership with Rutgers-Newark that will provide timely and in-depth insights on key instructional priorities.
- Actively recruited many more students to take advantage of free and reduced-price lunches, which already has translated into \$900,000 in additional federal funding for Newark.
- Worked closely with a cross section of educators, parents, and others to craft a new discipline policy, and the committee continues to meet monthly to monitor implementation.
- Met regularly with local charter schools, in part to learn what we can from their best practices and to explore innovative concepts for collaboration.
- Became the first district in New Jersey to calculate an accurate and more honest high school graduation rate, based on recommendations by the National Governors Association.
- Conducted several audits of instructional and operational practices (Cambridge Education, MGT of America, NPS “instructional walkthroughs,” KITMBA Group, Council of the Great City Schools), which have pinpointed numerous areas for improvement and cost savings.
- Increased the eligibility requirements for student athletes.
- Worked with scores of community leaders and citizens to help develop this strategic plan.



ENDNOTES

Great Expectations

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Priority 3

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