The Next Decade: 2020-30 Strategic Plan

2020 2021 2022 2023 2024 2025 2026 2027 2028 2029 2030

"Make topics *relevant* to students and connect to the *real world*."

- Shabazz Community Meeting

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A Message from the Superintendent

Roger León
Superintendent

To the Honorable Members of the Newark Board of Education, Elected Officials, Staff, Partners, Parents, Students, and the entire Newark School Community:

I am extremely pleased and honored to present this historic document, our 10-year strategic plan, *The Next Decade: 2020-30.*

Far into the future, when our descendants look back on this document, it will be part of the record of this historic turning point for the public schools of the city of Newark. Just as *The Federalist Papers* and *The U.S. Constitution* did for our fledgling nation in 1787, this strategic plan reflects the best thinking of our community's leaders regarding the structure and function of our city's public education institutions at this time, upon their return to local control after years of state operation, and for years to come.

Moreover, its timing is not the only historic aspect of this strategic plan. Its long-term view, covering an entire decade, is also momentous. To our knowledge, no other public school district has ever developed such a far-reaching plan.

Our vision and our plan are necessarily long-term. This is for two reasons. First, while I dearly love our city and its schools, we know there is much to do, much to improve. Second, our sights and expectations for our schools and students are high. Our vision is that in 10 years our schools will be equal in quality to the best anywhere and all our students will achieve to their fullest potential. This strategic plan will help guide us there.

I wish to acknowledge the thousands of stakeholders, community partners, staff members, parents, and students who have contributed to the development of this plan. *The Next Decade: 2020-30* is truly the product of a collaborative effort, involving nine concurrent roundtables of stakeholder groups and months of productive discussion led by internal and external experts. I especially wish to acknowledge and thank Creed Strategies for facilitating the process and working with us to prepare the plan.

Having completed this historic process, our challenge now is to implement this strategic plan and all of its priorities and strategies. On behalf of the entire district staff, I pledge to do so faithfully, diligently, and with warped speed. We will report periodically on our progress and continue to engage the community in our work. Through it all, students will be at the center. All of our work and every decision we make will be for the educational benefit of our students. Then, far into the future, our descendants will look back not only at this historic moment, but also at a decade from now, and they will see that great things have been accomplished for the children of our beloved city of Newark.

Sincerely,

Roger León
Superintendent

A Message from the Newark Board of Education

Josephine C. Garcia
President

On behalf of the Newark Board of Education, I am excited to be a part of this very historic moment in time. The process and preparation leading up to the unveiling of the 10-year strategic plan, *The Next Decade: 2020-30*, has been an amazing experience.

I acknowledge the students who demonstrated creativity, ingenuity, and an ability to show us the way. I acknowledge the parents who have gracefully collaborated with us to motivate and guide our students. I acknowledge all of the stakeholders who have supported and led the work to help us achieve this goal. I acknowledge the staff in the district for their tireless dedication and commitment to excellence. Everyone involved rose to the occasion and demonstrated perseverance, commitment, and notable strength.

The Next Decade: 2020-30 strategic plan will afford our students more opportunities, more Career and Technical Education options, increased Advanced Placement classes, and college courses and dual enrollment experiences resulting in associates degrees while in high school. The mentoring that students will receive as they pursue college and careers will provide them with necessary guidance and support systems for success. Our middle school students will be more involved in precollege and accelerated programs. This very important work will be enhanced during their high school years, but will commence while they are in elementary school. This strategic plan highlights the intentional connections made from conception to cradle and the school district's unprecedented efforts to support families from the beginning.

We commend and applaud the Superintendent and his Executive Staff for their leadership and the work launched to drive the district in an incredible direction. It is our collaborative effort as the Board to ensure that we stand behind his leadership and promote policies that support our children. We remain steadfast and valiant in our efforts to ensure that all of our students are provided with a high-quality education and social-emotional support to responsibly respond to our societal challenges.

I am thankful to my colleagues, proud of everyone's efforts, and look forward to the work ahead.

Sincerely,

Josephine C. Garcia
President

A Message from the Mayor

Ras J. Baraka
Mayor

2020 has proven itself to be a year of reckoning and awakening for our city, the nation, and the world. We are, indeed, living in unprecedented times. The global health pandemic caused by the spread of the coronavirus has exposed inequities and deficits in our systems that detrimentally affect the health and well-being of Black and Latino communities. Ongoing anti-racist protests opposing police brutality and demanding reforms to policing across the US and in countries around the world are pushing us to challenge and dismantle the pandemic of white supremacy in every facet of our society.

For many years, we have been working together as a city collectively to identify and address these issues in our own backyard. For us to strengthen and accelerate our efforts to create a Newark where we all prosper and have access to the opportunities and resources every human being needs to live meaningful and dignified lives, the Newark Public Schools (NPS) is vital.

This 10-year strategic plan is a prescient and timely road map to establishing a system of public schools that arms every child in our city with the education they need to navigate and experience success in an increasingly connected and complex world.

The Next Decade: 2020-30 centers students' understanding of themselves, their history and community, as well as the ability to relate to people from different racial, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds as an essential component of learning. The plan connects student learning to real-world experiences, higher-order thinking skills, and problem-solving. It aims to accelerate and enrich learning by training educators to understand culturally responsive education, how the brain learns, and our students' social-emotional needs. Importantly, this strategic plan weaves together the resources, organizations, and stakeholders in our city to ensure that we all play our part and hold each other accountable for creating the schools our students deserve.

As we continue to press forward and encounter the joys and challenges of our future, I am inspired by the vision this plan puts into motion for our children. I am inspired because I know firsthand the limitlessness our children possess and believe this plan is a pathway to creating the opportunities they need to know and realize their greatness. I am inspired because it is an ambitious plan and our children warrant our ambition.

As the Mayor, I commit to mobilizing the City's resources in partnership with NPS to bring this plan to life. I look forward to working with the district to make Newark the nation's exemplar for culturally responsive and equitable education that empowers our students to live and lead in the 21st-century.

Sincerely,

Mayor Ras J. Baraka

The Next Decade: 2020-30
The Newark Public Schools' 10-Year Strategic Plan

During the 2019-20 school year, the district implemented *NPS Clarity 2020*, a one-year strategic plan developed to create a bridge from our past to our future. The implementation of this plan has already produced major and numerous policy changes, instructional innovations, initiatives, and partnerships that are catalyzing strategic and systemic shifts across the district. Moreover, the implementation of *NPS Clarity 2020* has provided the opportunity to assess and determine how existing practices fit into our future.

After twenty-three years of state monitoring, the Newark Public Schools began its transition to full local control on February 1, 2018. The transition plan "outlined the process which full voting authority and governance would be returned to the School Board." During the transition, the Advisory Board, reconstituted as the Board of Education, selected the first locally-appointed superintendent, Roger León, on July 1, 2018. Newark voters passed a referendum for the Newark Public Schools to remain a Type II school board composed of elected board members in the election of November 6, 2018.

With a locally-appointed superintendent in place and the Board fully functioning as the district's governing body, we initiated an historic and truly transformational strategic planning process. The process included the development of *NPS Clarity 2020* to establish the foundation for long-term transformation.

Designed to maximize transparency and engagement, the strategic planning process included sessions with school principals, central office administration, and Board members as well as external stakeholder strategic planning conversations, meetings, work sessions, roundtables, community meetings, and a district-wide student conference. As part of *NPS Clarity 2020*, community conversations were convened according to the feeder patterns of the comprehensive high schools, as we know them today. These meetings engaged parents, community members, staff, and students where they live. Participants engaged in data analysis to identify root causes underlying attendance and academic achievement data and then worked in groups to formulate strategies to address the identified root causes. The development of *NPS Clarity 2020* included protocols and data collection instruments to guide these processes. The implementation of *NPS Clarity 2020* has created a strong platform for our continued transformation during the next 10 years.

The Next Decade: 2020–30 strategic planning process began in September 2019, while we were simultaneously implementing *NPS Clarity 2020*. The planning process included the implementation of the Strategic Planning Advisory Committee, Stakeholder Roundtables, NPS Equity Workgroup, Mission and Vision Workgroup, and Core Values Workgroup. This process uncovered shared themes that echoed from session to session and stakeholder to stakeholder. Higher expectations, cultural responsiveness, increased transparency, equity, and collaboration were consistently identified as critical to the future of the district. These themes are integrated into the priorities and strategies included in *The Next Decade: 2020–30*.

The Next Decade: 2020–30 is a comprehensive road map that guides the priorities and strategies that will best help us fulfill our mission and vision over the next 10 years. It incorporates a wealth of expertise and ideas from stakeholders who represent the diversity of our communities, schools, and partners as well as the analysis of student, school, and district data. The development of *NPS Clarity 2020*, and now *The Next Decade: 2020–30*, is an example of how one strategic plan should build from one to the other. Both plans synthesize and integrate strategies from students, parents, principals, executive staff, community members, and partners to set our course to a world-class school district. The plan includes our mission, vision, core values, a theory of action, priorities, and strategies and establishes the methodology by which we will continuously assess and measure our progress.

The Strategic Planning Process

Creed Strategies, a Newark-based consulting group, partnered with us to support the development of our transformation process and strategic plan.

Creed is a catalytic partner that collaborates with clients to help them examine and transform the beliefs, systems, policies, and practices that drive their organizations. Creed uses an education, social justice, and racial equity approach to development, collaboration, capacity building, and design in order to help partners situate their work in the shared aspirations and needs of the communities they serve. Creed works with partners to identify and develop sustainable strategies for systemic problems. Creed Strategies brings together a diverse community of experts serving school districts, nonprofits government agencies, private entities, and philanthropy to customize support to clients. When people work with Creed, they can expect to challenge the status quo and collaborate with a nimble, diverse, and creative team of experts who loves and believes in the genius of the communities Creed serves.

Culturally Responsive Education Equity Design (CREED), Creed's transformation framework, is designed to support the development of collaborative, strength-based, and culturally responsive learning environments that optimize student learning and student achievement in schools and districts. CREED empowers partners to redesign learning, create strong and mutual family and community partnerships, and achieve meaningful student outcomes. The CREED framework guided Creed's work with the district and the development of this strategic plan.

Plan the Process → Needs Assessment → Root Cause Analysis → Gap Analysis → Strategy Development → Strategic Plan
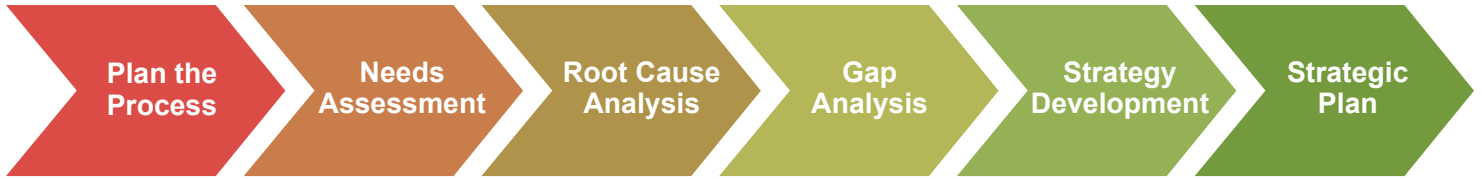
Work Strand	Purpose	Components
Awareness & Understanding	To prime all stakeholders for the learning process, and the work of strategic planning.	Overall Vision Broader Bolder Approach to Education (BBA) BBA as a Strategy to Achieve Vision Roles & Responsibilities
SWOT Analysis	To get everyone thinking about everything that could potentially impact the success of a new project.	Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats
Needs Assessment	To develop a holistic and thorough understanding of current conditions.	Student Achievement Equity Analysis Culture/Climate Pedagogy & Practice Social-Emotional Needs Personnel
GAP Analysis	To identify what needs to be addressed in order to move from our current condition to our vision.	Knowledge Skills Content Personnel Partnerships
Strategies & Actions	To plan the strategies and actions that will be taken and identify the resources needed to achieve our goals.	Professional Development Partnerships Curricula Organization
Alignment	To reflect and ensure coherence between the various levels of the system.	District Department Leadership Team Employee School Partner Community Parent & Family Student

Strategic Planning Timeline

Planning Level	2018		2019				2020	
	July-September	October-December	January-March	April-June	July-September	October-December	January-March	April-June
				Initial Plan Complete			Plan Complete (Tentatively)	Final Plan Complete
District	Awareness & Understanding	SWOT	Needs Assessment	GAP Analysis	Strategies & Actions	Alignment	Vision Priorities Annual Goals Actions Key Partnerships Roles & Responsibilities	Research Reflect Respond
Department	Awareness & Understanding	SWOT	Needs Assessment	GAP Analysis	Strategies & Actions	Alignment		
Leadership Team	Awareness & Understanding	SWOT	Needs Assessment	GAP Analysis	Strategies & Actions	Alignment		
Employees	Awareness & Understanding	SWOT	Needs Assessment	GAP Analysis	Strategies & Actions	Alignment		
School	Awareness & Understanding	SWOT	Needs Assessment	GAP Analysis	Strategies & Actions	Alignment		
Partner	Awareness & Understanding	Awareness & Understanding	SWOT	Needs Assessment	GAP Analysis	Strategies & Actions		
Community	Awareness & Understanding	Awareness & Understanding	SWOT	Needs Assessment	GAP Analysis	Strategies & Actions		
Parent & Family	Awareness & Understanding	Awareness & Understanding	SWOT	Needs Assessment	GAP Analysis	Strategies & Actions		
Student	Awareness & Understanding	Awareness & Understanding	SWOT	Needs Assessment	GAP Analysis	Strategies & Actions		

Developing The Next Decade: 2020–30

Implemented *NPS Clarity 2020*, the one-year strategic plan.

Convened strategic planning Advisory Committee meetings.

Captured input from nine roundtable groups.

Held Equity Work Group.

Redefined the mission, vision, core values, and developed a theory of action.

Developed Strategies.

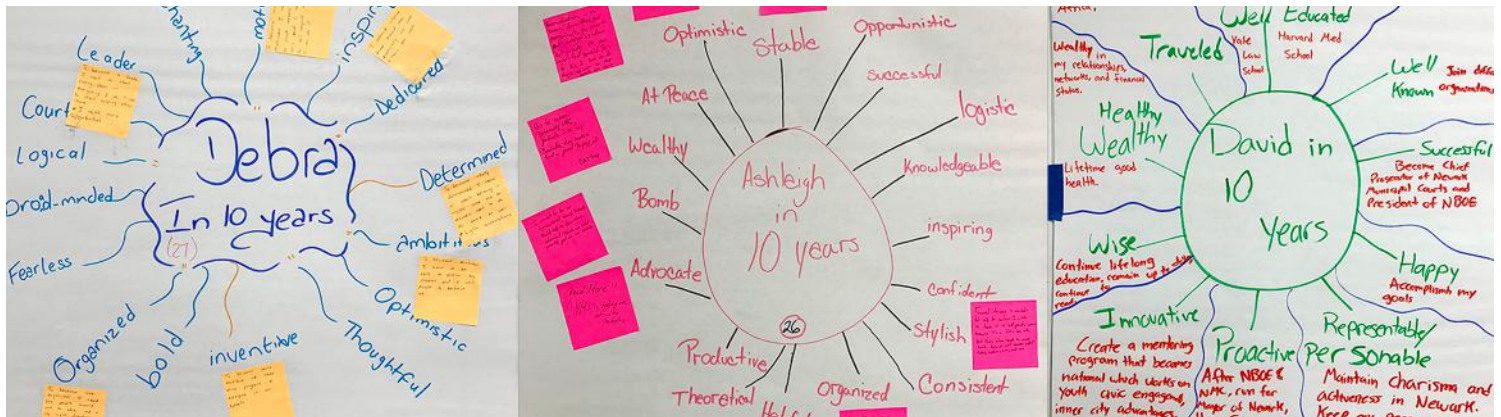Identified milestones, signposts, guardrails, and equity indicators.

Wrote and revised the Strategic Plan.

FALL 2018-SPRING 2020

75 MEETINGS HELD ACROSS THE DISTRICT

THOUSANDS OF PARTICIPANTS

100 PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

This 10-year plan focuses on 6 priorities and 35 strategies, each with specific action steps, milestones, benchmarks, signposts, guardrails, and equity indicators.

- Milestones signify major accomplishments in each priority.
- Benchmarks measure district progress based on 2020-21 baseline data.
- Signposts show when the district is headed in the right or wrong direction.
- Guardrails allow for creativity, innovation, and flexibility while preventing the work from going off course.
- Equity Indicators measure the district's progress toward the elimination of disparities in educational opportunities, resources, practices, and outcomes in the district.

Mission

Our mission is to deliver an academically rigorous and culturally responsive instructional program that prepares every student for success and builds knowledge, strengthens character, cultivates ingenuity, and fosters leadership.

Vision

Our vision is to build a new educational ecosystem that provides a world-class education for every child in Newark.

Core Values

Children at the Center
Every child is a genius and it is our responsibility to keep their dreams and needs at the center of all decisions.

Commitment to Excellence
We commit to continual, strategic, innovative, and research-based improvement in order to demonstrate excellence at all levels of the organization.

Reciprocal Relationships
We provide opportunities for impactful collaboration within and beyond the organization resulting in student success.

Cultivating Agency
We empower students to become advocates for themselves and for others.

Equity
We disrupt and rebuild every practice, policy, resource distribution, and system that may act as a barrier to opportunities for all.

Theory of Action

If Newark develops an educational ecosystem that comprehensively organizes resources, stakeholders, and institutions in our city to support the success of students, then we will catalyze the system-wide transformations needed to establish and sustain a culture of equity, continuous improvement, unity, and excellence for all.

The Logic Model

The *NPS Clarity 2020* logic model represents the new educational ecosystem we are building to ensure that our children have access to all of the opportunities and resources they need to live meaningful, productive, and sustainable lives.

- The **Keys** on the left side of the logic model are the resources, opportunities, experiences, and stakeholders we will organize to create a new ecosystem for our students.
- The **Game Changers** on the right side of the logic model represent the strategies and avenues we will use to accelerate our students' access, exposure, and experiences that will propel them forward.
- The **Center** of the logic model represents the academic progression of our children within the new education ecosystem. It defines critical transitions in our children's education.

Our students are at the center of the educational ecosystem defined in *NPS Clarity 2020*, surrounded by a dynamic tapestry of neighborhoods, anchor institutions, public agencies, community organizations, and businesses from many sectors that view our students' success as vital to their own. During the 2019–20 school year, NPS began to create new policies, establish strategic partnerships, participate more deeply in citywide collaborations, and launch initiatives that provide resources and essential support for children and families. This work across sectors and in collaboration with stakeholders has increased our ability to contribute to an environment where the healthy development of Newark's children is fostered from conception to cradle through college and careers.

> " Develop strategies to reduce the inequities impacting children across the district that impact their learning."
>
> *- West Side Community Meeting*

Over the next decade, our new educational ecosystem will continue to purposefully cultivate the relationships, resources, and opportunities every child needs to achieve their full potential in the 21st century. This new educational ecosystem will work synergistically to **reinvigorate** the environment in which our students live and the conditions in which they learn by **reinvesting** in the resources and strategies that matter most to our students' development, so our graduates **return** to our city as citizens, employees, and leaders.

- From conception to age 3, we will focus on healthy physical, cognitive, and emotional development to ensure each child enters prekindergarten ready to learn.
- From age 3 to grade 3, we will focus on building a strong academic foundation that includes a rich literacy experience and exposure to engaging, enriching learning experiences.
- From grade 6 to grade 8 we will support students' readiness for high school through accelerated learning opportunities at our high schools as well as on-campus opportunities at local colleges and universities.
- From grade 9 to grade 12 we will prepare our students for college and career through relevant courses that engage students in problem-solving, as well as through internships, apprenticeships, and dual enrollment programs.

We will stay connected to our graduates by tracking their progress and providing postsecondary resources and networks through college graduation and employment. This mentoring program will begin during students' elementary years with peer mediation and peer counseling and will be sustained throughout high school until they complete college or land their career, whichever comes first.

As we continue to transform the district into this new educational ecosystem, we will be guided by a continuous improvement approach in which we **research** and assess our work, **respond** to our findings, and **reflect** in order to learn from and improve our work.

NPS CLARITY 2020

Keys to 2020

- Higher Education
- CC&TE
  College, Career, & Technical Education
- Foundations; Business Partners
- Adult & Alternative Education
- Magnet and Comprehensive High Schools
- Elementary Schools and Early Childhood Centers
- Gifted & Talented
- Co-Curricular Activities and Extended Classroom Experiences
- Community & Faith Based Organizations
- Elected Officials
- Social Services
- Parents Families Students Community

Reinvest   Reinvigorate   Return

College → Career

Elementary Feeder School → Anchor High School ← Elementary Feeder School

Elementary Feeder School → Anchor High School ← Elementary Feeder School

Grade 6 to Grade 9
(Bridge to High School Success)

Grade 4   Grade 5
Gap   Analysis

Age 3 to Grade 3
(Every Child Reading by Grade 3)

Conception to Cradle to Age 3

Research   Reflect   Respond

Game Changers

- Alumni Associations; Coaching; Networking
- Internships; Jobs
- College Access; College Credits; Dual Enrollment; Apprenticeships; Internships; Mentorships; Industry Certifications
- Access to Higher Education
- Access to High School; Wrap Around Services
- Access to Early Childhood; Pre-natal Care; Health Care; Day Care

NPS Clarity 2020: Accomplishments and Major Initiatives

Enrollment[1]

In partnership with participating local education agencies (LEAs), the Newark Enrolls Universal Enrollment process operates under a standard set of rules that maximizes school choice for families. The district has upgraded the platform to optimize the equitable distribution of high-needs students across the participating LEAs in Newark. The new platform makes significant improvements with a robust search tool that uses geocoding to help families find schools with academic programs and co-curricular activities they desire.

The new system is user friendly, based on contemporary technology, and accessible via multiple platforms (including phones and mobile devices). It provides accurate reports tailored to the needs of Newark Enrolls. Families can identify and learn about schools and programs that match their children's needs and interests. They can also identify their top eight choices, mark them as favorites, and then proceed seamlessly into SchoolMint's user-friendly application process.

The following LEAs participate in Newark Enrolls:

Brick Education Network, Great Oaks Legacy Charter School, KIPP Newark, METS Charter School, Newark Educators Community Charter School, North Star Academy Charter School, Peoples Prep Charter School, Philips Academy Charter School, University Heights Charter School, and Roseville Community Charter School.

Fiscal Management

The district has developed a comprehensive process for the preparation of balanced annual budgets. Internal analysis and discussions with various department heads have allowed us to identify needs and cost increases and/or decreases in budgets.

The budget process includes an orientation about funding allocation and administrator training on how to use the district's budgeting platform, *My Budget File*.

Additionally, the Business Office continues to increase board capacity in the budget process, including informational sessions about the Sources of Funds, Spending Analysis and Budget Allocations for both Central Offices and Schools, and Overview of Weighted Student Funding Formula.

The district budget process includes the following widely held evidence-based practices:

- Weighted Student Formula for the equitable allocation of funds
- Use of a consistent budget development tool
- Training of users
- Assignment of individualized customer supports (assignment by location)
- Consistent use of fund accounting (GAAP)
- Grant monitoring
- Reporting and analysis of financial activities (monthly/quarterly projected budgets)
- Latest Thinking Forecast (LTF)
- Ensuring that financial staff are professionally certified and attend regular professional development in their areas
- Timely monthly reporting of district financial statements as required by the State of New Jersey

Footnote
[1]The content in this section was adapted from the Two-Year Report on the Transition to Local Control (June, 2020) written by Anzella K. Nelms.

Receipt of the Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO) Meritorious Budget Award for 2017–2018 and 2018–2019 for excellence in budget presentation reflects our commitment to sound fiscal management and budgetary practices. NPS also received the International ASBO's Certificate of Financial Excellence in June 2017 as recognition for comprehensive annual financial reporting.

As Newark Public Schools advances into the next decade, the integration of sound fiscal and educational practices informs our work.

Personnel

Training and support for administrators to coach, develop, and evaluate teachers intensified since 2018. The district has also amplified the support and development of new teachers. As a part of the transition to full local control, training strategies to build capacity in these areas were initiated or expanded during the last two years. These include summer training for administrators about their responsibilities under AchieveNJ and training throughout the academic year to assist new administrators in elements of the evaluation process.

New Jersey law requires that all teachers have a mentor during their first year of teaching. In addition to the foundational training, during the last two years, the Newark Board of Education has partnered with the New Teacher Center to train a cohort of mentors as high-impact instructional coaches. During this two-year training program, mentors were trained in a variety of strategies to support new teachers as they work to improve their practice, from supporting teachers in breaking down standards to effective coaching conversations.

These training programs and initiatives have improved the effectiveness of our evaluation practices. They have also increased the retention of new teachers and the number of new teachers who were rated effective or highly effective.

Our coaching and evaluation process has been a significant part of the district's efforts to have a robust and high-performing teaching staff. In addition to developing our educators, we are more successfully exiting staff members who do not show adequate progress.

First-Year Teacher Ratings by Mentor Type
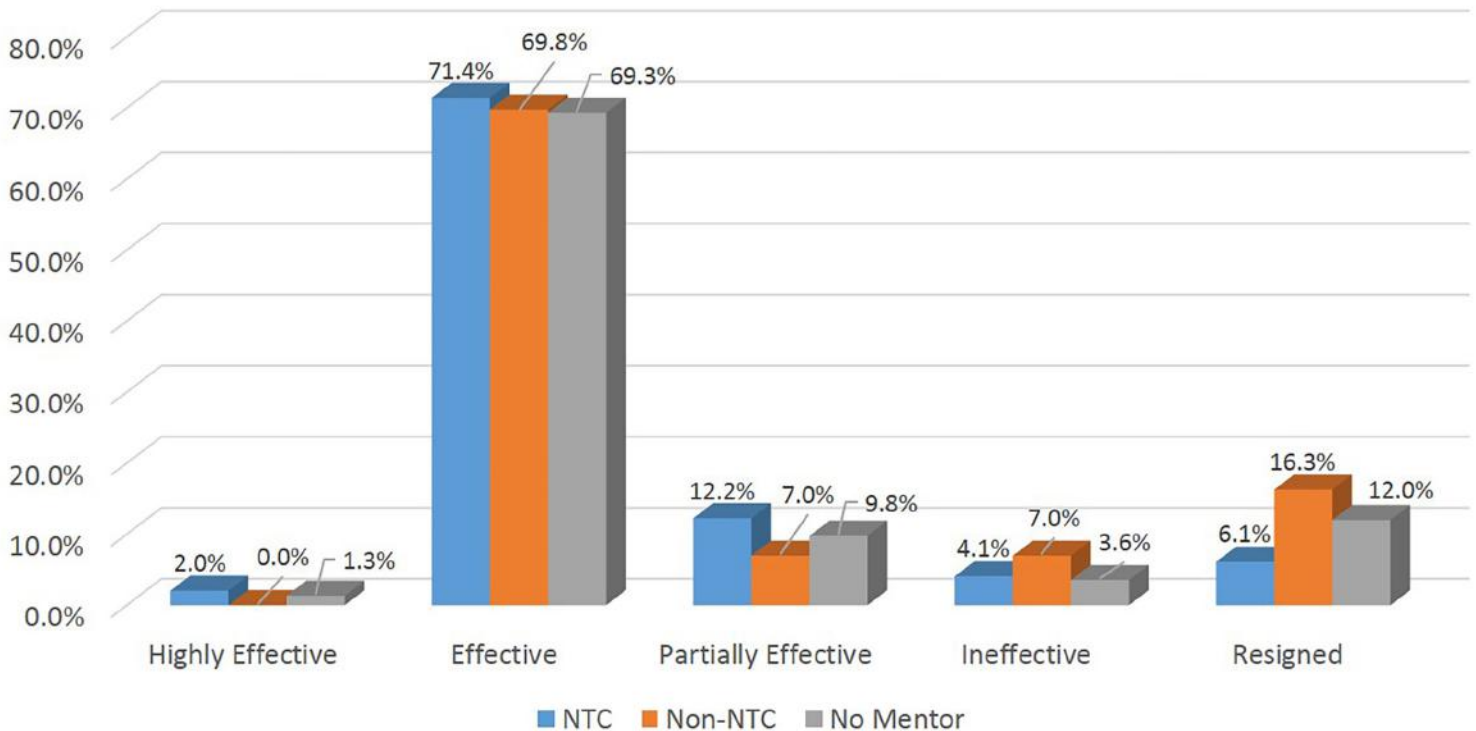
Program and Instruction

Since 2016, NPS has utilized The Equivalency Application (The Equivalency) to measure student academic progress. The Equivalency "allowed the effectiveness of the district's instructional program to be gauged through a variety of student performance measures that were specifically focused on current needs and circumstances." The Equivalency was approved for three years through the 2018–2019 school year. As outlined in the *Transition Plan*, we calculated our own scores and shared the data, analysis, and self-scoring with the State for review and confirmation. The Equivalency will remain in place for the next three years with additional measures to allow us to reach higher metrics.

Review of district curricula, based on student performance data and quality of teacher implementation, is ongoing for all grades. This includes alignment of curriculum with *New Jersey Student Learning Standard*s (NJSLS) and implementation of interim assessments that are appropriate for students with special needs and English language learners for all subjects.

The district is intensifying support to schools with planning resources that complement the curriculum and clarify what students should learn and when. Supervisory, coaching, and mentoring practices are expanding to ensure that instruction in every classroom is reflective of the quality needed to prepare students to meet curriculum demands. Opportunities for professional development addressing the specific needs of each staff member are in place.

We will continue to review available data for continuous improvement as well as equity across the organization.

The Conception to Cradle to Grade 3 Consortium

The Conception to Cradle to Grade 3 Consortium (The Consortium) is a collaborative partnership consisting of experts who service families in the City of Newark. The Consortium is comprised of county, state, and city leaders in healthcare, social services, and education who work together to achieve the vision as outlined in *NPS Clarity 2020*. The Consortium collaborates, plans, and pools resources to support the implementation of the district's Game Changers and children reading by grade 3.

Led by a Board of Directors, The Consortium consists of three committees: Executive Committee, Steering Committee, and Community Advisory Council.

The Executive Committee is made up of executive leadership from within the district, including Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning, Executive Director of Early Childhood, Executive Director of Special Education, Executive Director of Student Life, and Executive Director of Health Services.

The Steering Committee consists of presidents from local hospitals, the City of Newark Health Department, philanthropic partners, the New Jersey Department of Health and Essex County Childcare Referral Agency, and Advocates for Children of New Jersey.

The Community Advisory Council includes the Mayor's Office of Comprehensive Community Education, the Early Childhood Advisory Council, Greater Newark Healthcare Coalition, Statewide Parent Advocacy Network, and Secondary Parent Council.

This collaborative partnership focuses on students entering school healthy and ready to learn and providing access to extended-learning experiences that support reading by grade 3. The three focus areas are 1) Mapping the Neonatal and Early Childhood Universe, 2) the Early Childhood Campaign, and 3) the *Healthy and Ready to Learn Plan*.

Mapping the Neonatal and Early Childhood Universe
- Approximately 4,000 babies are born every year in the City of Newark.
- The district partners to identify all of Newark's babies and pregnant moms.
- The Early Childhood Advisory Council is identifying the city's assets, resources, needs, and gaps.

The Early Childhood Campaign
- There are about 8,000 children between the ages of 0 and 2 in the City of Newark.
- There are about 12,000 children between the ages of 3 and 5 in the City of Newark.
- All children from birth to age 5 should be in high-quality childcare or educational settings.
- Since 2018, NPS's preschool enrollment steadily increased to serve 86% of the preschool universe.

- There are close to 1,000 3- and 4 year- old children being served in centers that do not contract with the district.
- The number of infants and toddlers being serviced in the city is under investigation.
- Marketing and advertising for early childhood services, starting with our current preschool programs (flyers, billboards, PSAs, radio and television commercials, interviews, etc.), are being developed.

The Healthy and Ready to Learn Plan

Citywide Definition of Healthy and Ready to Learn:

Children are healthy and ready to learn when immunizations, physicals, and other health and child development screenings are up to date; children are meeting developmental milestones; and concerns are being addressed with high-quality interventions and care.

Purpose:

The *Healthy and Ready to Learn Plan* will define and identify the resources needed to ensure:
- *Pregnant moms* are receiving prenatal care inclusive of medical, nutrition, and mental-health services.
- *Children* are up to date on immunizations, physicals, and other health and child development screenings, children are meeting developmental milestones, or concerns are being addressed with high-quality interventions and care.
- *Families* are knowledgeable about local health and education services and prepared to optimize their children's learning outcomes.

Academies

The redesign work at the comprehensive high schools is a three-tiered strategy. Each academy at the comprehensive high schools has three partners in the development of the curricular program and facility design: magnet high school, higher education institution, and professional organization. Throughout the last two years, work has been under way in redefining all of our high schools in this very important work. While the primary focus of this redesign work is at the comprehensive high schools, the reciprocal relationship with the magnet high schools will ensure that all of our students graduate with marketable skills, certifications, dual enrollment in college courses, and internship experiences regardless of the high school they attend. These experiences and certifications will help increase their knowledge and marketability in today's competitive workplace. In addition, the collaboration and professional development opportunities between and across high schools will expand the magnet school options across the City of Newark.

The Wallace Foundation Creates a Principal Pipeline in Newark

The Wallace Foundation traces its origins back more than a half century. The founders gave freely of their time and their wealth and contributed generously to a wide assortment of artistic, cultural, and educational causes during their lifetimes. Today, The Wallace Foundation remains true to its passions for education, youth development, and the arts. It aims to better the lives of disadvantaged children in America's urban areas and foster the vitality of the arts for all. In particular, it focuses on school leadership, afterschool programming, summer learning, expanded learning, and arts education for young people.

Beginning in 2011, The Wallace Foundation provided grant funds and technical assistance to six large urban school districts that participated in its Principal Pipeline Initiative. These districts, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, North Carolina; Denver Public Schools, Colorado; Gwinnett County Public Schools, Georgia; Hillsborough County Public Schools, Florida; New York City Department of Education, New York; and Prince George's County Public Schools, Maryland, set out to develop and support a cadre of principals whose leadership would positively affect school outcomes. The administration in these six districts believed that they could improve on their recent experiences in hiring novice principals, some of whom had struggled to meet the demands of instructional leadership.

During the eight year study, titled *Building a Stronger Principalship*, these districts were charged with testing four key components of a pipeline. Those components were standards that specify what school leaders need to know and do, stronger preservice training, more selective and rigorous hiring procedures, and on-the-job evaluation and support. The big takeaway from the study was that principal pipelines can help improve student achievement. Moreover, benefits were large in schools in the lowest quartile of achievement. The impact of this work was that all schools benefited from this study, in particular schools with veteran principals.

In the 2019–20 school year, 90 other school districts from 31 states, and Washington, D. C. and Puerto Rico, were selected as a second cohort. The Newark Public Schools is on that list. A team of Newark leaders (executive staff and principals) have participated in a series of Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings organized around The Wallace Foundation sponsored research. The PLC's work, assisted by a Wallace provided facilitator, centered on a design to help the team reflect on district policies, processes, and infrastructures related to school leadership, and begin planning for improvement. This work is based on a set of evidence-based indicators within seven principal pipeline domains and a framework for applying the indicators. The seven domains are:

1. Leader standards
2. High-quality preservice principal preparation
3. Selective hiring and placement of principals
4. On-the-job evaluation and support
5. Principal supervisors
6. Leader tracking systems
7. Systems and capacity to support and sustain a Principal Pipeline

For each domain, the district identified indicators of implementation along a developmental progression with a five-year work plan for principal pipeline development. The five-year plan is written and approved, and will begin in July 2020. The Principal Pipeline is a key component of this strategic plan, and the principal is the lever.

Equity Workgroup

"The role of leaders for equity is to make inequities visible, disrupt policies and practices that perpetuate inequities, and create and design ways of engaging in communities and educating our young people so that everyone experiences a sense of belonging and thrives."
@equityproject | www.nationalequityproject.org

Research from the Civil Rights Project at the University of California at Los Angeles, which tracks segregation in the nation's public schools, finds that public schools are more segregated and higher percentages of students live in poverty than in 1954 when *Brown v. Board of Education* passed. This research also shows that students in these "majority-minority" schools are disproportionately suspended and expelled, drop out at higher rates, and are less likely to have access to effective teaching and rigorous and meaningful curricula. As a result, they attend and complete college at far lower rates than their peers (Frakenberg, et al., 2019). Data, gaps, and disproportionality within our system expose these disparities for our students as well. NPS is committed to equity to ensure the decisions, policies, and practices we employ proactively identify and close the gaps that prevent every child from reaching their potential.

It will take growth, change, hard work, and vigilance to achieve and maintain equity in our district. In December 2019, a group of 10 district representatives, including nine principals and the NPS General Counsel, gathered over a series of work sessions to develop an equity statement and make recommendations to the district to guide our approach to developing an equity framework. The following Equity Statement and recommendations have been integrated into the strategic plan to ensure equity undergirds our priorities and strategies.

Equity Statement

We disrupt and rebuild every practice, policy, resource distribution, and system that may act as a barrier to opportunities for all.

Recommendations for Infrastructure:
- Analyze the trends and data across all departments.
- Assess curriculum and instruction to support teaching and learning.
- Create an Equity Committee composed of every part of the ecosystem (law enforcement, DPW, healthcare, education, housing, sanitation, parents, teachers, students, etc.) that collects data for the purposes of identifying inequities within their practices that affect student success in school.
- Ensure government collaboration for policy making.
- Make the issue of equity a top priority with all stakeholders throughout the district with a timeline for implementation (change policies and include equity in rubrics).
- Research best practices nationwide to inform our practices.
- Require school-specific equity conversations with parents and all stakeholders.

NPS Accountability and Growth: Academic Achievement Indicators

"The systems we build must support the needs of children and their families, laying the foundation for equal opportunities, breaking generational poverty, and eliminating the school to prison pipeline."
- NPS Clarity 2020

*"In the simplest analogy possible, proficiency is a **destination**; growth is the **journey**."*
- The Difference between Proficiency and Growth

At the core of our theory of action for transforming our education system, lies the need for collective accountability for what we do in the service of preparing children for excellence. NPS is committed to creating an accountability system that is coherent, comprehensive, and grounded. Regular measurement and reporting in the context of accountability will keep schools and the district focused on what actions to take to improve our performance.

The NPS accountability framework will be a critical vehicle in broadly communicating expectations and catalyzing action. We recognize, of course, that accountability systems themselves do not raise achievement or reduce inequities in opportunities to learn; only the hard work of teachers, school leaders, and central office partners, can do that. However, as a set of policies and practices that guides how we measure what we do, an accountability system can set clear expectations for what it means to be a good school for all students. It can also establish balance in the celebration of high-performing schools with curating the right set of resources, supports, and interventions for those who are struggling, encoding paths to determine context-specific best practices in order to take them to scale across our schools.

Understanding that developing an accountability system is far from quick and straightforward, NPS will use the first year in the 10-year strategic plan to design a coherent, comprehensive, and grounded framework and collect baseline data. To quote the Education Trust, the way that an accountability system is designed matters–a lot. If the system creates the wrong priorities (shifting the focus away from improving student outcomes, for example), creates too many priorities (so schools have to chase 40 priorities instead of just focusing on a few essential ones), or sets expectations so low as to be meaningless (or so high as to be unachievable), we lose the power that an accountability system has to drive change.

Balancing Unification, Complexity, and Ambition

Our goal is a solid accountability model that is varied but not overly complex, designed to best serve our purpose in tracking progress toward increasing student achievement, decreasing achievement gaps, and improving educators' and schools' effectiveness. The long sweep of the district's historical context as a former state-operated school district requires an accountability model that is broad and boldly framed in order to drive toward a well-articulated conception of student and school success and a culture of continuous improvement rather than shame and punishment.

We will take special care when selecting indicators that will be used to classify schools. The stakes require indicators to be valid—meaning they measure what they purport to measure; reliable—meaning they measure a specific result consistently over time; and comparable—meaning they measure the same element of performance across different schools. A centerpiece in the baseline data collection will be state and college readiness assessment data.

Other measures associated with chronic absenteeism, graduation rates, access to advanced coursework, English language proficiency trajectories, social-emotional wellness, as well as indicators of school climate and safety, will round out our accountability framework's systemic assessment of school quality.

NPS will center calculations of growth in its annual measures of progress toward the accountability indicators it selects in Year 1 of the *Next Decade: 2020-30*. For example, with assessments, this means that, instead of comparing a snapshot of a student subgroup or school's performance at one point in time to an established target, the district will measure progress by tracking this index for the same students from one year to the next. The longitudinal metrics will center on cohorts of students, using matched data for those who have scores at all time points under consideration.

The accountability framework will integrate growth and status measures with goals for gains and achievement. The figures below illustrate how the district will capture high growth/high status as they relate to the baseline indicators that will be established in Year 1.

Types of Performance		
	Status	Change
Achievement	Status	Improvement
Effectiveness	Growth	Acceleration

Status/Growth Combinations		
High Status	High/Low	High/High
Low Status	Low/Low	Low/High
	Low Growth	High Growth

Streamlined: Status/Growth Integration
y-axis = status

2 Sustaining	1 Excelling
4 Underperforming	3 Improving

x-axis = growth
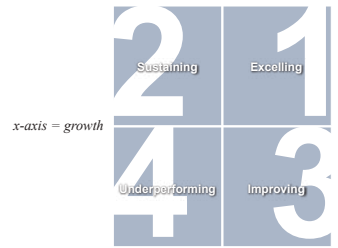
> " Work across departments to ensure we have data systems that support the strategic plan (e.g., centralizing data for early childhood, staffing data, and other data)."
>
> *- Office of Academic Services*

The chart below, which compares schools' five-year average English language arts proficiency rates on the New Jersey Student Learning Assessment (NJSLA) to growth over the same period, applies the conceptual underpinnings of the depiction of growth within the NPS accountability design.

NBOE NJSLA ELA Proficiency Rate VS. Five-Year Growth Matrix
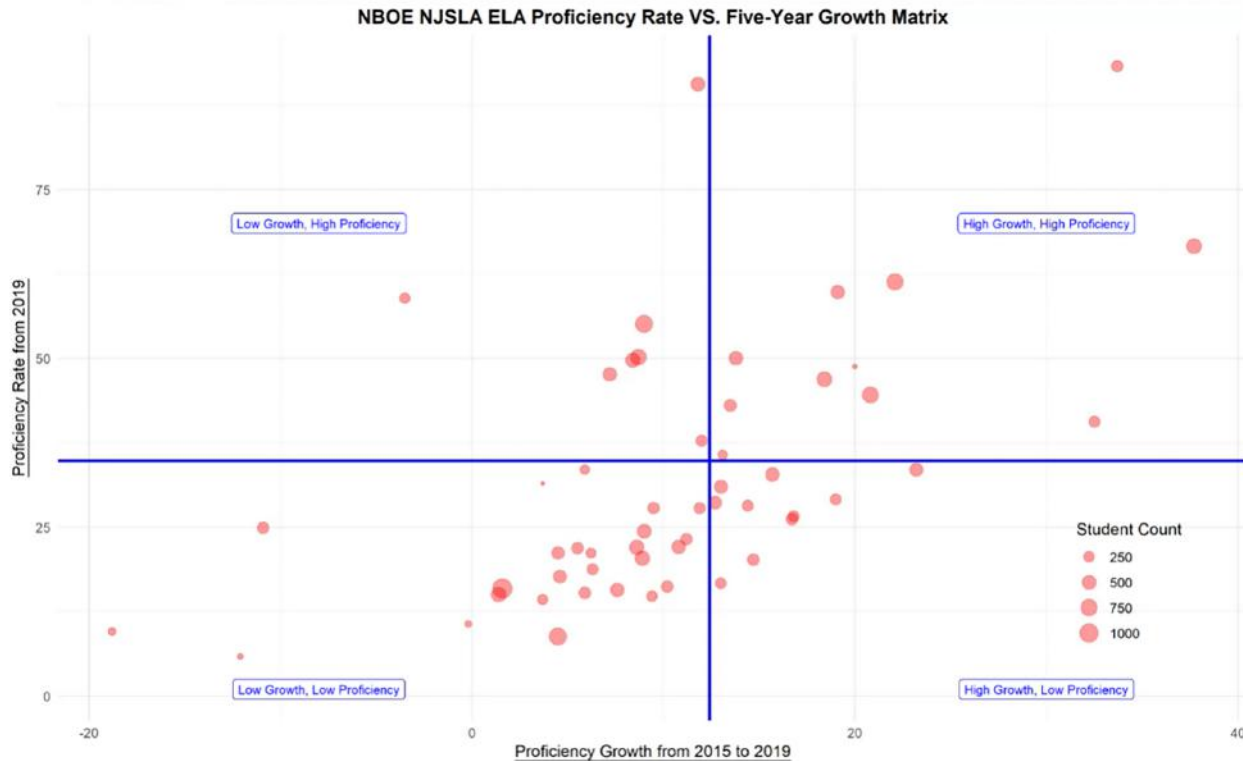
Note: the blue vertical & horizontal lines indicates the NPS average growth & proficiency from 2015 to 2019.
Schools' growth rate are calculated using their proficiency diffrence from 2015 to 2019.
Two exceptions are Girls Academy & 14th Ave as they were closed in 2016 & 2017;
therefore, their growth rate is calculated by using their most recent year's proficiency rate minus their profiencicy rate from 2015.

A total of 10 schools, all medium- and small-sized, fall in quadrant 1, which is associated with excelling. Another 17 schools fall in either quadrants 2 or 3, meaning they are sustaining or improving performance beyond the district average. 22 schools, many of them midsized to large schools, fall in the 4th quadrant, which is associated with underperforming.

As we collect baseline data, we will keep the following core principles in mind:

- Track student progress (longitudinal).
- Use an "open architecture" where all calculations are transparent.
- Set annual goals to close subgroup gaps.
- Set expectations for annual achievement based on meeting grade-level proficiency, not based on demographic characteristics or school characteristics.
- Include students, subgroups, schools, and districts in accountability.
- Use assessment data: annual, grades 3 to 8 and high school, operational for more than one year (e.g. at least two years' worth of data), and produce comparable results grade-to-grade and year-to-year.
- Consider data associated with student engagement, exclusionary discipline rates, professional qualifications of educators, and postsecondary enrollment rates.

NPS is poised to foster a spirit of continuous improvement, giving schools critical intelligence that can help them anticipate or diagnose problems and facilitate problem-solving. The comprehensive tracking of inputs and processes can provide the district with essential contextual information about where we have been; where we are going; and, most importantly, how we can get there. We recognize that the development of accountability mechanisms is a process where effective cultivation is iterative and ongoing. We will reassess the cohesion of the selected indicators and methodological approach in 2025.

The Fifth Year

As a 10-year strategic plan, rather than a one-year, three-year, or five-year plan, *The Next Decade: 2020–30* has profound implications. It suggests our goals are ambitious and our expectations high. It also demonstrates our understanding that institutional change takes time, and the strategies included in this plan cannot all be implemented at once. Nor can the results we envision for our schools be achieved in a short time. However, our long-term vision does not suggest that it will take 10 years for positive change and demonstrable improvement to occur in our schools. We expect that some change and growth will be immediate, some long-term.

For every priority in this 10-year plan, each strategy is to be implemented in five separate time intervals across five critical points in time: Year 1 (2020–21); Year 3 (2021-23); Year 5 (2023–25); Year 7 (2025–27); and Year 10 (2027–30). Our progress in each strategy will be assessed at every point. Each year will build on data and lessons from the previous year. We cannot wait until Year 7, for example, to learn that there is evidence of minimal growth or isolated areas of success. To become the educational institution we envision, we must continually assess the scope of our reach as we make improvements. In this way, Year 1 is as important as Year 10.

While every year of any strategic plan is important, the fifth year of this strategic plan is poised to be the point at which we can observe systemic and sustainable shifts in the district's trajectory. By Year 5, we will have laid the groundwork for progress for all of our priorities, and we will see the image, direction, and formation of a unified school system in the City of Newark. Here is a forward glance at a few areas of interest.

Newark Enrolls, our universal enrollment system, provides families one application to select their preferred schools of choice. Increased options for all of Newark's children, with all schools offering an educational program worthy of any child, will be the hallmark of the district's universal enrollment process. Some believe this exists today, but in Year 5, all will realize what it should have been all along, a family-friendly system of choice serving all of Newark's students and schools. We believe that parents should have their children attending the school of their choice and that it is the district's responsibility to offer in every school a quality option worthy of the children of the City of Newark.

The Conception to Cradle to Grade 3 Consortium is a three-tiered structure that consists of experts who serve families in the City of Newark. This group will work together to achieve the vision as outlined in the strategic plan by pooling resources to support the implementation of the district's Game Changers and children reading by grade 3. The three focus areas are: Mapping the Neonatal and Early Childhood Universe, the Early Childhood Campaign, and the *Healthy and Ready to Learn Plan*. The Consortium will strategize how to contribute to the district's vision so that by Year 5, the infrastructure will develop and grow throughout the rest of the ecosystem.

The premier academies at Newark's comprehensive high schools are currently entering their second stage of design. By the end of Year 1, they will be new programs of study in alignment and collaboration with the district's magnet schools and their partners in higher education and professional organizations. The academies will continue to strengthen and expand these partnerships and engage middle school students in summer programs and through other learning opportunities. The redesign in curriculum and facilities will be completed and fully functional by 2025. Year 5 will firmly set the ties between the comprehensive high schools and their respective partner magnet schools. We will continue to redefine feeder patterns by linking one elementary school in each ward with each premier academy to create a pipeline from the identified elementary schools to each magnet school. This will strengthen and improve each school and increase the options worthy of selection by Newark's students and their families.

The district-wide mentoring program is a partnership between the district, nonprofit organizations, and local corporations. From the elementary level through the first years of high school, peer training, peer mediation, and peer coaching will establish a strong foundation for each student with the assistance of administrators, teachers, advisors, school counselors, and social workers. In Year 5, the mentoring program will be fully integrated into our high school experience for all students, providing assistance and support during the first two years of high school and extending upon graduation from high school through college and career.

Year 5 will begin with the introduction of a fully redesigned portfolio of programs for our exceptional learners. The collaborative work led by the Office of Special Education in Years 1 through 4, in consultation with parents and advocates, will result in a continuum of special education programs that will serve as national models of excellence. These specialized programs will offer a full continuum of services across schools that will allow our students with exceptionalities to develop and flourish with the maximum amount of inclusive opportunities. This includes their transition from school to college, work, and life. Our teachers and teacher-aides will undergo highly-specialized training alongside child study team professionals to collaboratively serve our students.

The School Leadership Council (SLC) will form a group of stakeholders who will take a stronghold over individual schools and/or groups of schools. Every SLC will receive training and support to provide the leadership and advocacy to our schools. In Year 5, SLCs will be fully incorporated into all schools and play a pivotal role in defining and supporting school goals.

The *Long-Range Facilities Plan* will change the school district's landscape by changing our footprint of schools. This footprint has already begun to grow; we have increased enrollment and opened four new schools in two years. We expect to continue increasing enrollment and opening more schools in the new educational ecosystem. By Year 5, the new landscape and footprint will be well-established.

With the support of The Wallace Foundation, the Principal Pipeline will have completed its first full cycle by Year 5. The six school districts where the Principal Pipeline originated have all demonstrated major improvements. Because the principal is the lever of this strategic plan, we expect to also see evidence of that work every year, and substantial improvement by Year 5.

The Principals' Equity Group has set the district on course to undertake the challenging work of addressing equity. Equity work is wide-ranging and far-reaching. It examines beliefs, biases, and perceptions and also analyzes data to determine what disparities exist and assesses the causes of these disparities. We have a lot of work to do to heal wounds and improve student achievement. Any inequities existing in our system must be addressed immediately to ensure that by Year 5 we have an equity plan with clear policies and actions in place and are perceived as a district that responds to inequities swiftly and transparently.

The district's professional development program will expand from meeting the needs of individuals and small teams to school-level transformation and models of excellence in professional improvement for all employees, instructional and noninstructional. By Year 5, we will unveil a professional development school and programs of study that will serve as research sites to enable the system to learn from its schools, staff, students, and families. Our schools will improve because we will study what we do and learn from the research.

There is much to do. We know we must move fast, but we also must be methodical. We need to be competitive and innovative, but we must also build systems that fit our needs in Newark to foster growth, sustain the change we seek in the organization, and transcend time. In order to compete with the very best school districts in New Jersey and the nation—and to become one of them—we must be humbled by the reality that our best is yet to come.

1 Unified and Aligned Systems

Key Strategies

1.1 Organize and align departments and resources to support district priorities, strategies, and initiatives.

1.2 Adopt a sustainable fiscal strategy and operating budget that is aligned with the strategic plan and drives district priorities.

1.3 Build and implement a district-wide data warehouse complete with multi-source information and unified business rules that support real-time data integration, quality control, and data mining and analytics to improve achievement, instructional practice, and organizational efficacy.

1.4 Attract and recruit highly effective and qualified staff who are excellent matches for the district, develop a pipeline of candidates for hard-to-fill areas, and provide support to all employees that enables and empowers them to fulfill their role in our mission.

1.5 Develop a capital strategy aligned with the *Long-Range Facilities Plan* and strategic plan to modernize all facilities, and plan for enrollment projections, academic programs, and community needs.

1.6 Create a district-wide equity framework to promote equity in all systems, policies, procedures, and practices; close existing gaps in opportunity, access, achievement, expectations, and resources; and eliminate race and class as predictors of student success.

1.7 Develop and implement a *Hybrid Learning Plan* that establishes policies, procedures, and practices for all areas of district operations, articulating how the district operates in-person and virtually as well as during extended closings.

Learning is at once deeply personal and inherently social; it connects us not just to knowledge in the abstract, but to each other. Why else would it matter so much when a teacher notices something special about a student? Throughout our lives, as we move from setting to setting, we encounter novelty and new challenges, small and large. If we are ready for them, living and learning become inseparable.

What if all communities were dedicated, first and foremost, to fostering this connection between living and learning? Such a world might feel very different from our own. There would be no boundaries between "school" and "work" and "life." Skillful people, from groundskeepers to accountants to scientists to artisans, would have a steady stream of apprentices, both children and adults. People of every age would continually embark on new endeavors and enterprises, taking failure in stride, readily seeking one another's help. Teenagers would spend most of their learning time outside school walls (as Hall puts it, "with all that energy, they shouldn't be in school"), working on projects with real meaning for them. And children would be everywhere, in civic meetings and business conferences, just as they are present in significant meetings among many indigenous peoples. An innate community- wide culture of learning would lead to fewer quick fixes that seem to work at first but then backfire. The children, the culture, and all everyday practices would continually remind people of the real purpose of our endeavors: to look out for the long term.

Arguably, with the pace of social, economic, and technological change continuing to accelerate, we are already moving into such a world, whether we are ready for it or not. Some critics say that this will make schools irrelevant. We feel exactly the opposite is true. No matter how technologically advanced our world becomes—no matter how many tablet computers they own or how many functions their smartphones perform—children will always need safe places for learning. They will always need launching pads from which to follow their curiosity into the larger world. And they will always need places to make the transition from their childhood homes to the larger society of peers and adults.

Excerpted from Senge, P., et al. (2012). *Schools That Learn: A Fifth Discipline Fieldbook for Educators, Parents, and Everyone Who Cares About Education.* New York, NY: Crown Publishing Group.

Background

Redesigning our entire system requires the disciplined and systematic use of evidence-based strategies and practices, as well as sustained focus on increasing coherence throughout the system (Bryk et al., 2010; Fullan, 2016). In this strategic plan, we pay attention to measuring system outcomes. We are equally attentive to identifying the processes that will drive the results we desire for our students and creating measures for them as well. Over the next decade, the systems, policies, procedures, and practices organizing our district will create an infrastructure that works collaboratively to meet the needs of our students and families and adapts responsively to novel situations.

The development of this infrastructure began with the implementation of *NPS Clarity 2020*. As a part of this process, district policies in critical areas, including attendance, discipline, and graduation, were updated to ensure alignment with state requirements and best practices.

Expansion of our data system and data practices allows for the generation of more timely and formative reports to guide decision making in all areas of our operations and to support school leadership. We initiated a focus on equity with a group of school leaders establishing the foundation for the more intensive examination of disparities and development of a framework for a sustainable equity plan.

Highlights

→ Audited central office departments to ensure titles, roles, and responsibilities are aligned with *NPS Clarity 2020*.
→ Reorganized the Office of Academic Services.
→ Piloted implementation of Student Bus Pass.
→ Held eight employee recruitment fairs, including multiple fairs focused on hard-to-staff areas and recruiting Black and Latino educators.
→ Created employee exit survey to help us better understand why teachers and other employees are leaving the district and shape our strategy moving forward.
→ Developed a comprehensive "Floor Plan" to inform budget review sessions with schools and offices.
→ Developed and implemented a funding formula that differentiates between grade levels, special education classifications, and other student characteristics to allocate resources for all schools.

NPS will continue to strengthen the integration and alignment of our departments and systems to ensure deeper learning, greater collaboration, clear direction, and collective accountability. The following strategies will guide the development of the systemic conditions needed to redefine our district over the next 10 years.

Strategies

1.1 Organize and align departments and resources to support district priorities, strategies, and initiatives.

TIMELINE	
2020-2021	Create interdepartmental structures that foster collaborative and supportive working relationships across departments; expand the collaborative work between district staff and principals and School Leadership Teams (SLTs) to improve student learning; develop operational policies and standard operating procedures for governing how departments and different levels of the system work together, including a master calendar, departmental mission statements, and rubrics that prioritize collaboration; and ensure the alignment of the implementation of the district strategic plan with all legislative and regulatory policies governing the district.
2021-2023	Align academic planning, budgeting, and staffing for the district into an integrated process with established timelines and checkpoints throughout the year.
2023-2025	Scale-up the implementation of district-wide priorities, strategies, and initiatives.
2025-2027	Assess collaboration between central office departments and schools to jointly solve problems and ensure implementation of district priorities, strategies, and initiatives.
2027-2030	Maintain a district infrastructure that works collaboratively to meet the needs of our students and families and adapts responsively to novel situations.

1.2 Adopt a sustainable fiscal strategy and operating budget that is aligned with the strategic plan and drives district priorities.

TIMELINE	
2020-2021	Prepare a *Five-Year Revenue and Expenditures Forecast* estimating revenues and expenditure information based on past, current, and projected financial conditions for a number of district factors, including enrollment, facilities, and contracts; develop a *Long-Range Financial Plan* that establishes a framework for equitable business and operational processes, which supports district goals, maximizes efficiencies, and minimizes cost; continue to utilize the flexible elements of district and school budgets to equitably distribute resources; ensure the allocation of additional resources to schools facing greater challenges; provide support to principals to align school budgets to both the district and school strategic plans; and foster fiscal transparency by communicating clear guidelines for where, how, and why funds are allocated at all levels of the organization.
2021-2023	Implement procedures to maximize the school-based budgeting process to increase collaborative decision-making; ensure principals have access to the data they need to make informed decisions about strategic school design, professional development, student supports, partnerships, and programs; and identify areas for cost-sharing and external funding to support the priorities, strategies, and actions included in the strategic plan.
2023-2025	Conduct a district-wide cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness analysis of expenditures.
2025-2027	Prepare a *Five-Year Revenue and Expenditures Forecast* that estimates revenues and expenditure information based on past, current, and projected financial conditions for a number of district factors, including enrollment, facilities, and contracts, and ensure alignment of district resources to updates in the strategic plan.
2027-2030	Conduct a district-wide cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness analysis of expenditures.

1.3 Build and implement a district-wide data warehouse complete with multi-source information and unified business rules that support real-time data integration, quality control, and data mining and analytics to improve achievement, instructional practice, and organizational efficacy.

| TIMELINE	
2020-2021	Establish a district-wide data team to guide the vision and uses of data across the district and support schools' data-use work; develop and implement cross-departmental (district-wide) policies and procedures for data collection and data sharing, including a data collection master schedule and formal processes for prioritization and coordination across departments and schools; facilitate communication between the Central Office and schools to support data reporting, requests, and analysis; identify and implement performance indicators to measure the progress of the district and schools; provide professional development for data collection; and establish a consistent level of data literacy across all departments and schools in the district.
2021-2023	Support implementation of proven solutions and best practices of data use in schools; review and monitor student- school- and district-level data; and publish annual reports of district progress.
2023-2025	Monitor the progress of the district toward achieving its vision for data use; communicate district progress; and publish annual reports of district progress.
2025-2027	Publish a five-year assessment of district progress.
2027-2030	Partner with an external research organization to publish a 10-year longitudinal assessment of the implementation of *The Next Decade: 2020-30*.

1.4 Attract and recruit highly effective and qualified staff who are excellent matches for the district, develop a pipeline of candidates for hard- to-fill areas, and provide support to all employees that enables and empowers them to fulfill their role in our mission.

TIMELINE	
2020-2021	Identify and implement policies, procedures, and incentives that recruit, retain, and reward the highest quality talented teachers, principals, and staff for all school and district employment units; establish a robust pipeline that strategically cultivates student teachers from local universities into successful applicants; continue to engage the state to streamline the certification reciprocity process for teachers with certifications from out of state; ensure evaluation frameworks, policies, professional development opportunities, and employee support are aligned and streamlined in order to manage employee performance and organizational growth; streamline communication between Human Resources, schools, and departments to align resources and opportunities for employee support that address shared needs; create a clear pipeline for graduates of new high school Teacher Academies, and identify the leading reasons that teachers exit; train leaders on relevant retention strategies; and work with other departments, as well as school leaders, to develop a strategy to quickly identify teachers at risk of exiting the organization and provide support needed to help them stay with the district.
2021-2023	Identify and invest funds to move all aides (per diem and permanent) into permanent, full-day positions; ensure that the compensation structure of the school district is equitable (both internally and in comparison to other districts) and a plan is in place to maintain equity; create engaging and efficient employee platforms, including more robust and automated onboarding, hiring, performance management, and compensation management, to effectively guide and support employees through phases of employment and advancement; implement a suite of new employees modules to provide all new employees with the resources and training they need to successfully navigate entry into the school community and their role in the district; leverage the improved certification reciprocity process with the state to increase recruitment overall and specifically from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Hispanic-Serving Institutions; ensure every school has at least one student teacher who will fill a future vacancy; assess the reliability of the exit survey; and identify teachers at risk of exiting the organization and provide support for these teachers.
2023-2025	Continue to increase and improve pipeline programs with local colleges and universities, HBCUs and Hispanic-Serving Institutions.
2025-2027	Partner all new employees with mentors in their respective areas of work; assess implementation of plan; and revise as needed.
2027-2030	Assess implementation of plan; and revise plan as needed.

1.5 Develop a capital strategy aligned with the *Long-Range Facilities Plan* and strategic plan to modernize all facilities, and plan for enrollment projections, academic programs, and community needs.

TIMELINE	
2020-2021	Align all capital strategies with the *Long-Range Facilities Plan* and strategic plan; identify and procure innovative forms of supplemental capital funding to achieve and support the district's long-range facilities goals; adopt an enrollment projection methodology to plan for district growth and expansion, and school construction; and integrate technology infrastructure, including hardware, software, wiring, and wireless access points into all facilities plans.
2021-2023	Review and remediate facility needs every two years based on new data, community engagement feedback, strategic plan alignment, Board priorities, and legislative and regulatory requirements.
2023-2025	Review and remediate facility needs every two years based on new data, community engagement feedback, strategic plan alignment, Board priorities, and legislative and regulatory requirements; implement a data-driven and community-informed deliberative process to guide district-wide modernization efforts with a focus on efficiency and sustainability; and develop the 2025–2030 *Long-Range Facilities Plan*.
2025-2027	Implement the 2025–2030 *Long-Range Facilities Plan*; and review and remediate facility needs every two years based on new data, community engagement feedback, strategic plan alignment, Board priorities, and legislative and regulatory requirements.
2027-2030	Review and remediate facility needs every two years based on new data, community engagement feedback, strategic plan alignment, Board priorities, and legislative and regulatory requirements; implement a data-driven and community-informed deliberative process to guide district-wide modernization efforts with a focus on efficiency and sustainability; and develop the *2030–2035 Long-Range Facilities Plan*.
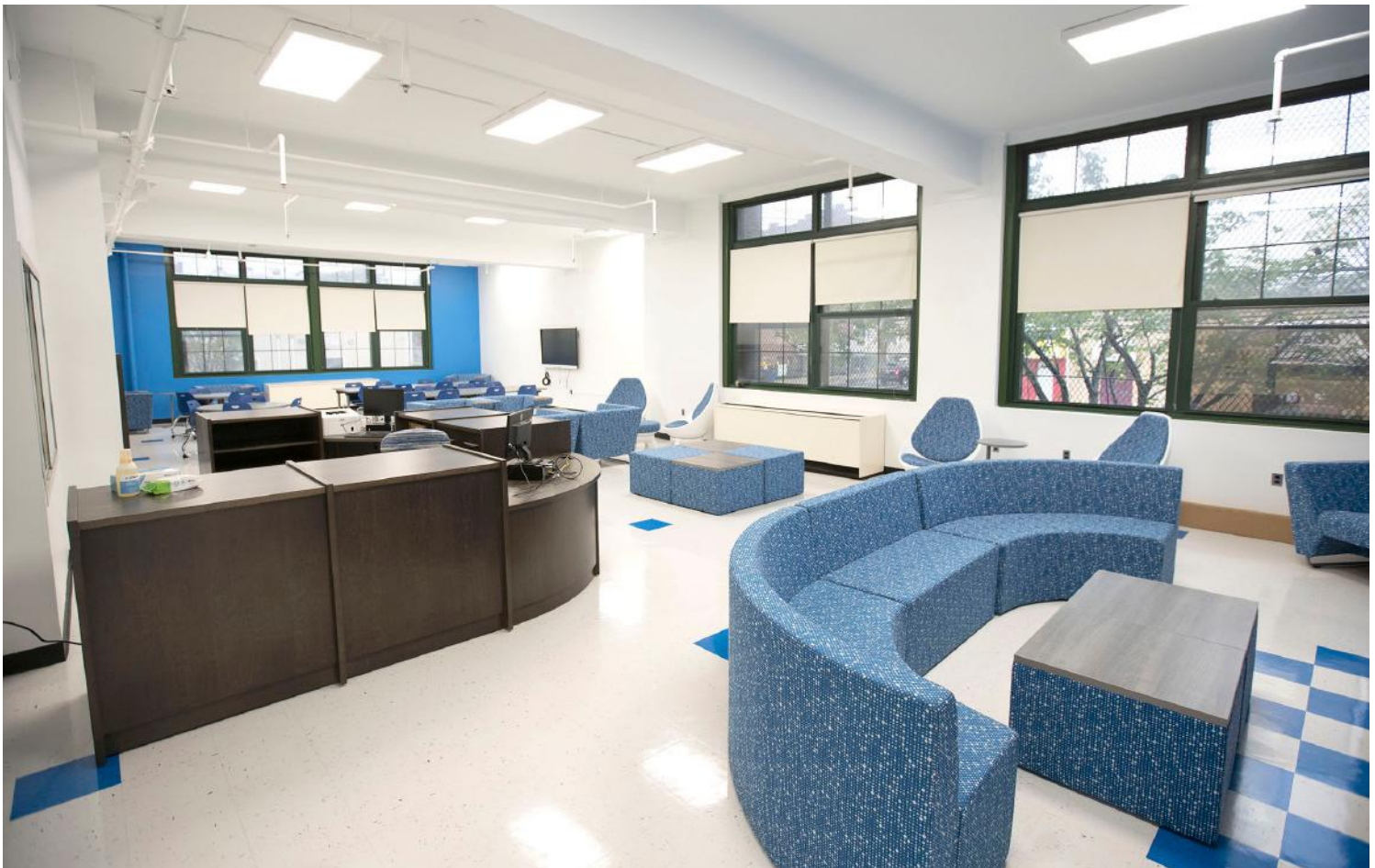
1.6 Create a district-wide equity framework to promote equity in all systems, policies, procedures, and practices; close existing gaps in opportunity, access, achievement, expectations, and resources; and eliminate race and class as predictors of student success.

TIMELINE	
2020-2021	Assign an Executive Staff member to guide equity work across the district and explore the possibility of a creating a full-time position to assume that responsibility in the future; undertake a comprehensive organizational equity analysis to identify racial, economic, language, gender or disability inequities; develop a district-wide *Equity-Plan*; create an Equity Team at each school to develop school-level equity plans; and develop a sustainable budget for the resources, materials, and professional learning/development needed to support equity work in the district.
2021-2023	Implement a district-wide *Equity-Plan* addressing culture, training and professional development, and resource allocation across the district and in schools; provide equity-focused, continuous, and job embedded professional learning to all employees; assess disproportionality; provide Equity Teams and school staff with professional development and training as needed; continuously monitor and increase equity in the schools; and pilot Equity Walks in identified schools.
2023-2025	Continuously monitor *Equity-Plan* implementation and, respond to persistent or emerging inequities at the district and school level; and implement Equity Walks in all schools.
2025-2027	Continuously monitor *Equity-Plan* implementation and respond to persistent or emerging inequities at the district and school level; and align the Professional Development School (PDS) with the district's Equity Plan.
2027-2030	Conduct a 10-year longitudinal assessment of equity transformation in the district.

1.7 Develop and implement a *Hybrid Learning Plan* that establishes policies, procedures, and practices for all areas of district operations, articulating how the district operates in-person and virtually as well as during extended closings.

TIMELINE	
2020-2021	Create a district task force to make recommendations concerning school operations, staff supports, student supports, instruction, and remote learning; provide hardware and Wi-Fi access to students; develop a guidance document that clearly articulates the district's plan for extended school closure; create a metric that evaluates the effectiveness of remote learning; and provide professional learning for all staff on the use of online platforms and digital learning tools.
2021-2023	Study results of *Hybrid Learning Plan*; share and document best practices of remote learning; develop a sustainable model for responsive training and technical assistance that supports staff, students, and parents; support principals with the integration and implementation of the district's *Hybrid Learning Plan* within their school's strategic plan; and implement a formal review cycle to assess and replace hardware to focus on both short- and long-term sustainability and ensure continuity of access.
2023-2025	Assess the quality of the district's *Hybrid Learning Plan*; and make modifications based on data and research findings.
2025-2027	Continue to assess and modify the *Hybrid Learning Plan* based on advancements in technology-based learning, computer hardware and software, platform innovations, and student and school learning needs.
2027-2030	Ensure the *Hybrid Learning Plan* provides authentic learning experiences for all students; and maintain equitable access to digital tools, hardware, and the internet for all students.

Indicators

Indicators in Priority 1 will measure how systems operate, interact, and communicate with each other, including 1) policies and procedures that establish alignment and transparency within and across departments and teams, 2) the knowledge schools have about the kind of work done across different teams and departments and where to go for needs and resources, 3) access to reliable data, and 4) relational trust.

The following **milestones** will signify a major accomplishment in this priority:

- Percentage of employees reporting they have the resources and support needed to be successful in their jobs increases.
- Percentage of employees reporting that they have meaningful opportunities for growth within the district increases.
- Percentage of employees reporting the district demonstrates an inclusive culture of mutual trust, respect, and positive attitudes that supports collaboration and initiative in the district increases.
- Percentage of employees reporting the district provides active, constructive support to staff members designed to maintain and extend their capacity to contribute effectively to student learning and the district increases.

These **signposts** will show us when the district is headed in the right or wrong direction:

- Percentage of fund balance at the end of the fiscal year.
- Additional funding spent on facilities.
- Percentage of state audit findings successfully addressed.
- *New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum* (NJQSAC) score.
- Employee Absenteeism Rate decreases.
- Employee Satisfaction on Employee Surveys increases.
- Number of Employee Evaluations increases.
- Employees have a common understanding of the mission, vision, and theory of action guiding the district.

> "Having a unified, aligned system allows for teaching and learning to move in one agreed upon, common direction which ultimately supports every aspect of student learning."
>
> *- Office of Academic Services*

These **guardrails** will allow for creativity, innovation, and flexibility while preventing the work from going off course:

- A transparent, clearly defined, and fully implemented system of employee supervision and evaluation to improve professional and instructional practices is in place.
- Comprehensive needs assessment to continuously plan for improvement occurs within all schools and the district.
- Improvement efforts are effectively aligned with other district and school priorities and adjusted as needed.
- District and school leadership and staff regularly analyze multiple types of data (e.g., student learning, demographic, processes, and perceptions) to plan and revise improvement efforts.

These **equity indicators** will help to measure the district's progress toward the elimination of disparities in educational opportunities, resources, practices, and outcomes in the district:

- Information is available in different languages.
- Completion of an equity audit and development of a district *Equity Plan*.
- Proportionality of student outcomes increases.
- Distribution of resources within and across schools is need-based.

2 A Rigorous and Relevant Framework for Curriculum and Instruction

Key Strategies

2.1 Develop and implement a pre-K through grade 12 inclusive curricula and assessments that elevate historically marginalized voices, strengthen and sustain a focus on the instructional core, and provide opportunities to learn about perspectives beyond one's own scope.

2.2 Develop a digital learning platform that enables students, teachers, and caregivers to actively engage with educational content in classroom or virtual settings.

2.3 Develop a cognitive-learning approach to pedagogy and instruction that deepens understanding of the science of learning and centralizes knowledge building as core to improving the academic achievement of all students, including English language learners, students with special needs, and struggling learners.

2.4 Implement a district-wide assessment system that is aligned to curricula, integrates multiple measures, and allows accessibility and modifications for students with disabilities and English language learners.

2.5 Integrate social-emotional learning (SEL) into the instructional program through curriculum design and professional development.

2.6 Ensure curricula for college and career programs are executed with fidelity across all schools, increase the integration of academic core instruction into Career and Technological Education (CTE) programs of study, and provide higher education and internship opportunities.

Learning is about developing the personal, interpersonal, and cognitive capabilities that allow one to diagnose what is going on in the complex, constantly shifting human and technical context of real-world practice and then match an appropriate response… Instructional, or pedagogical (we use the terms interchangeably), systems must include the development of at least the following four components:

- Build a common language and knowledge base. Cultivate system-wide engagement by involving all levels of the system to capture and create a model for learning and teaching. Identify the learning goals and principles that underlie the learning process. This collaborative approach builds language to promote meaningful conversations about practice.
- Identify proven pedagogical practices. The process typically begins with an analysis of best practices currently used in the district and an examination of the research to validate the model. Ownership and commitment emerge at all levels of the system study, work, and learn together.
- Build capacity. Provide consistent and sustained capacity building based on research-proven practices to build precision in pedagogy. Teachers need "a deep multidimensional knowledge that allows them both to assess situations quickly and to draw upon a variety of repertoires for intervention. Individual teachers possess such knowledge but it is largely invisible to the field as a whole. There are few ways for it to be gathered, codified and shared" (Mehta, Schwartz, & Hess, 2012). Collective capacity building and the collaborative work processes in previous chapters make the knowledge and skills accessible and visible to all.
- Provide clear causal links to impact. Pedagogies should specify the two-way street between learning and assessment. Such a process serves to strengthen the specificity of instructional practice and its causal efficacy in making a difference to learning. This is what Hattie (2012) is getting at with his mantra "know thy impact." Knowing your impact is not just a matter of being responsible for outcomes, but it also reverberates back to clarify how teaching and learning can be strengthened.

Excerpted from Fullan, M. and Quinn, J. (2016). *Coherence: The Right Drivers in Action for Schools, Districts, and Systems*, pp. 86-89. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Background

At the core of an excellent education is a common instructional framework that guides and supports learning and teaching. A common instructional framework provides consistency, organization, and support for all teachers to plan and deliver the most effective instruction. It also supports meaningful professional learning through a collective lens for teachers to learn together, support each other, and focus on improving their practice over time. The implementation of a common instructional framework establishes the content and expectations for smarter, more purposeful teaching and deeper learning.

The district is developing comprehensive, culturally responsive, and interdisciplinary curricula that create real-world, community-based, and virtual learning experiences for our students to move our students to deeper learning and higher levels of performance. This framework integrates neuroscience and education to bring together pedagogy and information about how the brain learns to improve instruction. It will create robust learning experiences in classroom environments that support the way human brains are wired to learn. It will also provide students the challenge they need to be motivated, curious learners (Jensen, 2005). During the 2019–2020 school year, we began many initiatives and curriculum changes to achieve this transformation.

Highlights

→ Updated NPS curricula to meet the *New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum* (NJQSAC) requirements for all subjects at all grade levels.
→ Developed an Office of Teaching and Learning.
→ Created new Career and Technological Education (CTE) curricula for the new Academies.
→ Created a new *Response to Intervention Guide*.
→ Deepened our partnership with Montclair State University in order to increase the number of certified bilingual and English as a second language teachers for the district.
→ Afforded Child Study Team members with comprehensive training in NAVIANCE through a collaboration with the Office of Special Education and the High School Guidance team.
→ Developed a district Amistad framework that is now being used to guide the development of K to grade 12 curriculum.
→ Created and administered interim assessments.
→ Administered the PSAT 8/9 to all grade 8 students.
→ Selected new pre-K through grade 12 benchmark assessments that include progress-monitoring for SY 20–21.
→ Surveyed visual and performing arts teachers across the district to collect information about art spaces, budgets, scheduling, partnerships, delivery of content, challenges, successes, co-curricular activities, and professional development.
→ Completed a textbook evaluation process for high school biology, chemistry, and physics. New textbooks will be provided to all students enrolled in these courses beginning in SY 20–21.
→ Created a five-year curriculum calendar that was approved by the NBOE in August, 2019.
→ Implemented new kindergarten through 12th-grade language arts literacy and mathematics curricula, along with new textbooks.

The strategies included in Priority 2 put the district on the path to continue building on the progress we have made as a result of *NPS Clarity 2020*. This work prioritizes the resources and opportunities needed to offer deep and culturally empowering learning experiences for all students from prekindergarten through grade 12.

Strategies

2.1 Develop and implement a pre-K through grade 12 inclusive curricula and assessments that elevate historically marginalized voices, strengthen and sustain a focus on the instructional core, and provide opportunities to learn about perspectives beyond one's own scope.

TIMELINE	
2020-2021	Develop and share Snapshots by grade level; create curricula for Pre-AP curricula for English I, Algebra I, Biology and World History and Geography and new CTE courses; develop K—5 interdisciplinary curricula for social studies and language arts literacy; revise 9–12 science and 6–12 health curricula; add supervisory personnel to the Office of Science and the Office of Social Studies; conduct program evaluation of K—12 visual performing arts and K—5 health; support all students' learning by focusing on specific power standards that leverage learning across disciplines, show endurance across grade levels, and are considered by teachers to be essential; cultivate district capacity in language arts literacy and mathematics to include culturally responsive content knowledge and effective classroom practices; identify gaps in existing content in order to amplify historically marginalized perspectives, cultures, and backgrounds; research and identify Culturally Responsive- Sustaining Education (CRSE) frameworks, guidelines, and courses (e.g., Ethnic Studies) for implementation; develop a partnership between leaders in the field, local colleges and universities, and NPS to develop a district CRSE course sequence that provides microcredentials to instructional and other staff; provide all special education learners with the resources required to participate in the general education curriculum; and implement the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) process with fidelity.
2021-2023	Develop and revise K—5 health curricula by infusing it into existing social studies and science curricula; develop (2022) and implement (2023) K--12 visual performing arts curricula; create Pre-AP curricula for English 2, Geometry, Statistics, and Chemistry in 2021 and implement in 2022; conduct program evaluation of world languages and K—12 physical education in 2023; develop administrator guides for existing curricula and include a crosswalk between *New Jersey Student Learning Standards* (NJSLS) and *Essential Elements*; adopt/develop CRSE framework, guidelines, and courses (e.g., Ethnic Studies) for implementation throughout the district; integrate absent cultures, perspectives, histories, and voices into all content areas; ensure each school's professional development plan provides the resources and necessary support for schools to deliver inclusive curricula and assessments; institute a CRSE Transformation Pilot in schools that are ready to undertake CRSE self-assessment and inquiry; collaborate with leaders in the field to offer a district- embedded CRSE course sequence that provides micro-credentials to instructional and other staff; pilot the development of more relevant and culturally significant humanities courses at the high-school level to replace generic humanities courses; and adjust existing curriculum and power standard emphasis based on New Jersey State Learning Assessment (NJSLA) results, and district testing.
2023-2025	Develop and revise world language curricula in 2024; create interdisciplinary humanities curricula at the high school level across all three years; conduct program evaluations of language arts literacy and mathematics in 2025, develop administrator guides for existing curricula and include a crosswalk between NJSLS and Essential Elements; revise grade-level Snapshots; adjust existing curriculum and power standard emphasis based on NJSLA results, and district testing; conduct program evaluation for existing CTE programs; design innovative and flexible schedules to give students access to a wider offering of courses and extended- learning opportunities in social sciences, science, health and physical education, the arts, and world languages; assess the CRSE Transformation Pilot, share results, and engage more schools; continue to offer a district-embedded CRSE course sequence that provides micro-credentials to instructional and other staff; and expand the pilot of more relevant and culturally significant humanities courses at the high-school level to replace generic humanities courses.
2025-2027	Continue to build capacity to include CRSE content knowledge and effective classroom practices in all content areas; highlight best practices within the district; expand culturally relevant humanities courses to include middle school electives; assess the implementation of district pilots, share results, and modify practices based on findings; partner with local colleges to develop college-level humanities courses for implementation on high school campuses; conduct program evaluations of science and social studies curricula; revise language arts literacy and mathematics curricula and CTE courses in 2025; revise science and social studies curricula in 2026; develop administrator guides for existing curricula; and adjust existing curriculum and power standard emphasis based on NJSLA results, and district testing.
2027-2030	Maintain a culture of high expectations that fully integrates equity, CRSE, and inclusion in every facet of our work; assess the integration of district-adopted CRSE guidelines, framework, and practices across the district; conduct program evaluations of world language, visual and performing arts, physical education, and CTE in 2028; write curricula for these subjects in 2029 and implement in 2030; and adjust existing curriculum and power standard emphasis based on NJSLA results, and district testing.

2.2 Develop a digital learning platform that enables students, teachers, and caregivers to actively engage with educational content in classroom or virtual settings.

TIMELINE	
2020-2021	Integrate a learning management system (LMS) in support of a learner-centered learning environment; model and reinforce healthy and acceptable uses of technology throughout the district and schools; ensure assistive technologies are used as needed and are available on demand for all English language learners and special education students; develop teachers' use of technology to enhance discrete, research-based instructional strategies and infuse meaningful and significant digital learning experiences into the curriculum to deepen students' learning and understanding; and provide opportunities for students to use technology to produce and share their demonstrations of learning to a more authentic audience, such as publishing their work to the internet.
2021-2023	Ensure assistive technologies are used as needed and are available on demand for all English language learners and special education students; increase opportunities for students to use technology to produce and share their demonstrations of learning to a more authentic audience; infuse meaningful and significant digital learning experiences into the curriculum to deepen students' learning and understanding; build teacher understanding of computer science and computational thinking at all grade levels; and support school leaders to build use of technology across content areas and grade levels in each school.
2023-2025	Ensure assistive technologies are used as needed and are available on demand for all English language learners and special education students; continue opportunities and expand partnerships for students to use technology to produce and share their demonstrations of learning to a more authentic audience; assess practices for technology use in classrooms every two years; coordinate with the Office of Staff Development to deploy professional development resources and opportunities to schools; and provide embedded professional learning for administrators and teachers.
2025-2027	Ensure assistive technologies are used as needed and are available on demand for all English language learners and special education students; assess practices for technology use in classrooms every two years and modify practices based on findings; and coordinate with the Office of Staff Development to deploy professional development resources and opportunities to schools.
2027-2030	Assess practices for technology use in classrooms every two years and modify practices based on findings; coordinate with the Office of Staff Development to deploy professional development resources and opportunities to schools; model and reinforce healthy and acceptable use of technology throughout the district and schools; and evaluate instructional technology platforms, programs, and infrastructure for upgrades.

2.3 Develop a cognitive-learning approach to pedagogy and instruction that deepens understanding of the science of learning and centralizes knowledge building as core to improving the academic achievement of all students, including English language learners, students with special needs, and struggling learners.
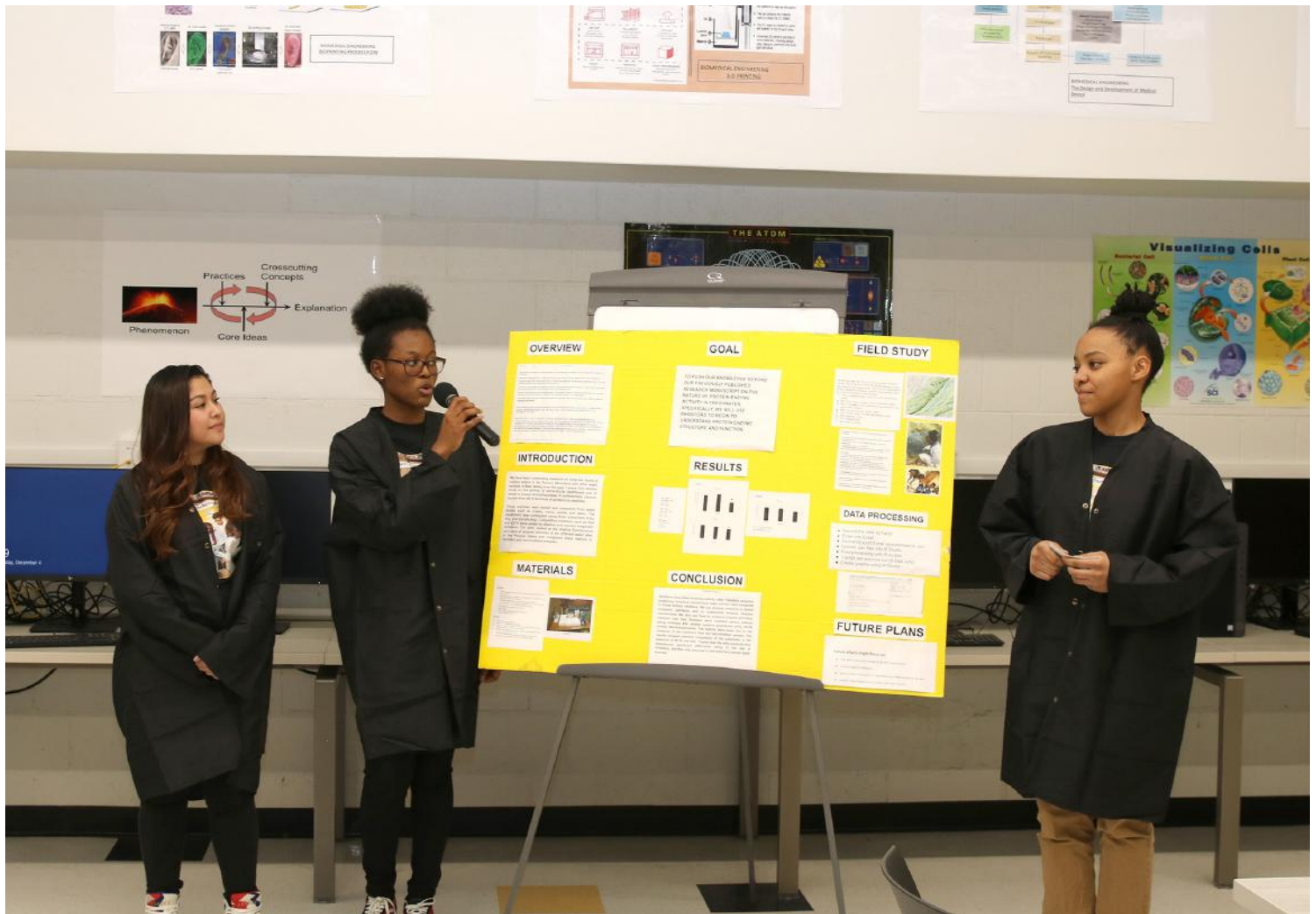
TIMELINE	
2020-2021	Prevent reading difficulties in pre-K to grade 2 by educating all teachers, academic interventionists, teacher coaches, and vice principals in foundational aspects of early literacy (including writing) through the Offices of Teaching and Learning and Special Education; develop Individual Learning Plans for each student who is identified through assessments as underperforming; determine key power standards and focus school-wide and district-wide attention on developing these standards; deepen learning by establishing teacher clarity through the development of learning intentions, success criteria, and daily instructional tasks; build precision in pedagogies and accelerate through digital technologies and collective capacity building; implement *Response to Intervention Guid*e in all schools; develop teacher uses of accommodations during classroom instruction to ensure student use during benchmark and state standardized assessments; build teacher and leader capacity in a conceptual understanding of mathematics; develop trackers for students at grades 3 and 6 who are at risk, and link these trackers to grade 9 students; research and develop Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP); ensure assistive technologies are used as needed and are available on demand for all English language learners and special education students; research middle and secondary students; and implement Pre-AP courses in eight high schools.
2021-2023	Develop knowledge of writing pedagogy in teachers, academic interventionists, Teacher Coaches, and vice principals; use benchmark and progress-monitoring assessments and revise instruction as needed; implement Individual Learning Plans for each student who is identified through assessments as underperforming; determine key power standards and focus school-wide and district-wide attention on developing these standards; develop, implement, and evaluate foundational pre-K language arts literacy guides and mathematics guides; build teacher capacity and address student needs through a range of professional learning offerings that focus on science content; develop trackers for students in kindergarten and grades 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, and 8; implement SIOP program; incorporate instructional play into kindergarten classrooms through a revision of curricular guides; integrate language arts literacy and social studies curricula in pre-K—5 through the development of units of studies that focus on literature, writing, civics, history, geography, and economics; develop in grades 3 through 12, educators' knowledge of vocabulary instruction; develop social studies and science teachers' knowledge and practice of reciprocal teaching; use high-level text alongside explicit comprehension and vocabulary strategies to build K—12 students' knowledge across all content areas; ensure general education, special education, and bilingual/English as a second language teachers have common periods to plan instruction; pair traditional curricular content with digital and other media platforms that provide current and relevant context from culture; develop instruction for extended classroom trips to community-learning sites (museums, parks, cultural centers, neighborhood recreational centers, and community centers) to foster students' cultural understanding and connection to the surrounding community; research digital literacy pedagogy and content; implement academic improvement plan for middle and secondary schools; implement Pre-AP across all high schools; and provide all instructional staff with professional development about the science of learning.
2023-2025	Use benchmark and progress-monitoring assessments and develop Individual Learning Plans for each student identified as underperforming; develop and implement grades 6–12 humanities curricula with explicit content that spirals across grade levels; connect instructional content with the daily lives of students by using culturally-specific examples that tap into their existing interests, knowledge, and culture; teach crossdisciplinary units of study in pre-K to grade 1 connecting the arts, social studies, language arts, and science; develop digital literacy across all grades; create a collection of classroom-based videos that illustrate key reading, writing, and speaking/ listening concepts; monitor and evaluate academic improvement plan for middle and secondary schools; and establish learning partnerships to deepen understanding of all instructional staff about the science of learning and implement brain-based instructional strategies.
2025-2027	Use benchmark and progress-monitoring assessments and develop Individual Learning Plans for each student identified as underperforming; increase curricular choices for all secondary students; leverage Option 2 to shift from seat time to mastery for some content areas; determine key power standards and focus schoolwide and district-wide attention on developing these standards; add to collection of classroom-based videos that illustrate key reading, writing, and speaking/listening concepts; and assess the integration of brainbased instructional strategies in the learning process.
2027-2030	Use benchmark and progress-monitoring assessments and develop Individual Learning Plans for each student identified as underperforming; add to collection of classroom-based videos that illustrate key reading, writing, and speaking/listening concepts; continue to assess the integration of brain-based instructional strategies in the learning process; and integrate local best-practices into the Professional Development School (PDS).

2.4 Implement a district-wide assessment system that is aligned to curricula, integrates multiple measures, and allows accessibility and modifications for students with disabilities and English language learners.

TIMELINE	
2020-2021	Procure benchmark and progress-monitoring assessments for K-12 in the areas of reading, mathematics, and science; implement district-developed writing assessment; and research social studies benchmark assessment and progress-monitoring.
2021-2023	Implement social studies benchmark assessment; collect and track data points (K-12 benchmark data and progress-monitoring; pre-K enrollment relative to kindergarten enrollment; percent of fourth and eight graders proficient in reading and math on National Assessment of Educational Progress [(NAEP)], Algebra I completion rates for credit by grade 9; ninth-grade course failure rates; ninth graders with B average (GPA) or better; absentee rates by grade level and school; suspension rates; instructional days missed per 100 students due to suspensions; Pre-AP enrollment; AP participation rates; AP-equivalent participation rates; AP exam pass rates; four-year graduation rate; and NJSLA for language arts, mathematics, and science); and disaggregate achievement data, such as reading levels, district benchmarks, and state standardized assessments by program per school, grade level, race and ethnicity, language, and gender.
2023-2025	Disaggregate achievement data, such as reading levels, district benchmarks, and state standardized assessments, by program per school, grade level, race and ethnicity, language, and gender; provide job-embedded professional development and coaching support to all instructional staff and Student Support Teams (SSTs) on the use of multiple measures of assessment to drive classroom instruction, inform Student Support Services, and monitor the implementation of Individual Education Plans (IEP); utilize digital tools and resources, such as real-time formative assessment tools like forms, quick polls, shared work spaces, and adaptive learning resources to use data to drive instruction, determine student progress and differentiate instruction; and implement a tiered approach to the analysis of student and school performance data that allows for the development of data-driven instructional, professional development, address student and learning student needs support across plans the organization.
2025-2027	Adjust programs based on analysis of data.
2027-2030	Fine tune programs based on data analysis.

2.5 Integrate social-emotional learning (SEL) into the instructional program through curriculum design and professional development.

TIMELINE	
2020-2021	Survey central office coaches, supervisors, and directors to identify supports needed to help them readjust and plan long-term for post COVID-19; ensure collaboration between the Offices of Teaching and Learning and Student Life to articulate the dispositions and skills related to SEL and provide central office staff with research related to SEL; create an SEL guidance document for curriculum development; and provide research-based SEL training to central office staff and principals.
2021-2023	Provide an audit of existing curricula to ascertain the level of SEL within existing documents; create recommendations for curriculum revision; embed SEL within newly developed curricula; provide professional development to teachers on SEL strategies, dispositions, and skills that are embedded in curriculum; and develop a measurement for SEL implementation.
2023-2025	Continue to stay informed about SEL-related research; and use research to update and inform curriculum and instructional practices.
2025-2027	Measure effectiveness of SEL practices in the district.
2027-2030	Revise curriculum and update professional development based on SEL research.

2.6 Ensure curricula for college and career programs are executed with fidelity across all schools, increase the integration of academic core instruction into Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs of study, and provide higher education and internship opportunities.

TIMELINE	
2020-2021	Establish partnerships and pipeline programs with institutions of higher learning that lead to the enrollment of NPS graduates; and utilize higher education and industry partners to review curriculum.
2021-2023	Redesign high school to include in-school, virtual, and field-based learning; and design and develop a plan to implement career exposure beginning in elementary school and continuing throughout the middle and high school years, with a focus on career and technical education, internships, apprenticeships, and career exploration.
2023-2025	Ensure all aspects of Perkins Grant are actualized by school leaders; continue to track student college and career participation postsecondary school; and develop flexible schedules to support student participation in dual-enrollment with local colleges and universities.
2025-2027	Ensure all aspects of Perkins Grant are actualized by school leaders; continue to track student college and career participation after high school; and monitor flexible schedules to support student participation in dual-enrollment with local colleges and universities.
2027-2030	Continue to monitor and adjust CTE programs and update professional development based on evaluation and assessment data.

Indicators

Indicators in Priority 2 will measure the structures, resources, materials, and assessments in place to organize culturally engaging and academically rigorous student learning and to provide instruction that supports individual student needs in order to continuously increase student performance.

The following **milestones** will signify a major accomplishment in this priority:

- Percentage of high school students enrolled in Advanced Placement, dual-credit, apprenticeship, or internship programs increases.
- Percentage of students completing Algebra I increases.
- Percentage of students passing Algebra I assessment increases.
- Percentage of subjects/curricular materials that are reflective of race, culture or ethnicity of students increases.
- Percentage of students reporting rigorous and culturally responsive curriculum increases.
- Percentage of teachers reporting rigorous and culturally responsive curriculum increases.
- Percentage of students enrolled in Gifted and Talented Programs increases.
- On-time graduation rate increases.
- College enrollment of graduating class increases.
- Decrease in college remediation rates.
- Number of early education seats available increases.
- Percentage of eligible children enrolled in preschool increases.

These **signposts** will show us when the district is headed in the right or wrong direction:

- Increased student enrollment district-wide.
- Increased Grade 6 Algebra I readiness.
- Increased percentage of students reporting that assigned school work is meaningful and important.
- Increased percentage of teachers at each school reporting that they can support students to believe they can do well in schoolwork.
- Increased percentage of high school students on-track for high school graduation with a "C" or higher.
- Increased percentage of 2nd grade students meeting early literacy benchmarks.
- Increased gifted and talented programs at all schools.
- Increased departmental and school collaboration.

These **guardrails** will allow for creativity, innovation, and flexibility while preventing the work from going off course:

- Courses designed to meet student interests.
- Clear pathways/pipeline to college, career, and life after graduation.
- Partnerships with higher education and business.

These **equity indicators** will help to measure the district's progress toward the elimination of disparities in educational opportunities, resources, practice, and outcomes in the district:

- Data-informed plan to reduce inequities in access to courses and services.
- Access to information and services.
- Differentiated opportunities for families.
- State-of-the-art Special Needs Autism facility/resources in each ward.
- Proportionality of student outcomes increases.
- Equitable access to arts, science, and physical education among students.

3 Strength-Based and Responsive Culture

Key Strategies

3.1 Communicate a shared vision and plan for developing, supporting, and sustaining positive culture and climate in all classrooms, schools, and departments across the district.

3.2 Implement processes and practices to infuse a collaborative, equity-driven, and responsive culture and promote communication and trust throughout the system.

3.3 Build the capacity of the Office of Student Life, including all necessary staff and resources, to support the development of collaborative and learning-driven cultures in all schools and departments.

3.4 Establish an array of ongoing and diverse opportunities for staff, parents, students, and partners to plan for strategies to connect learning to students' lives and promote student learning in the community.

3.5 Develop district-wide practices, activities, and norms that promote social and civic responsibility and a district commitment to social justice.

Culture Tree by Aliza Maynard (as featured in Hammond, 2015)
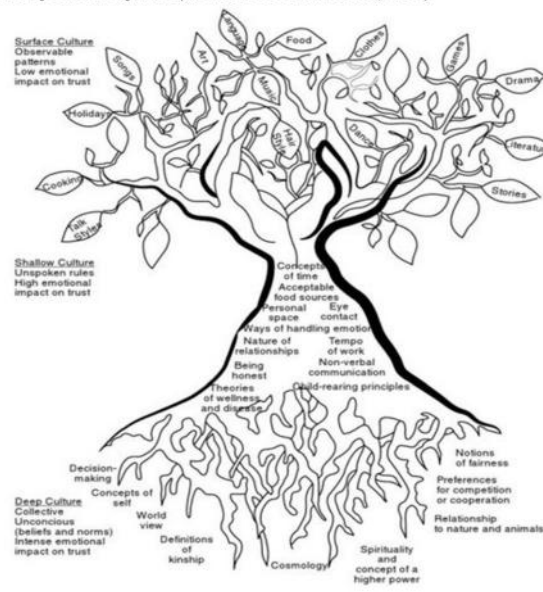
When talking about culture, people often represent the three levels of culture as an iceberg, with the surface culture as the tip of the iceberg, shallow culture located just below the water line and deep culture the largest part hidden deep in the water. Rather than use the metaphor of an iceberg, I like to compare culture to a tree. A tree is part of a bigger ecosystem that shapes and impacts its growth and development. Shallow culture is represented in the trunk and branches of the tree while we can think of surface culture as the observable fruit that the tree bears. Surface and shallow culture are not static; they change and shift over time as social groups move around and ethnic groups intermarry, resulting in a cultural mosaic just as branches and fruit on a tree change in response to the seasons and its environment. Deep culture is like the root system of a tree. It is what grounds the individual and nourishes his mental health. It is the bedrock of self-concept, group identity, approaches to problem solving, and decision making.

Excerpted from Hammond, Z. (2015). *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain: Promoting Authentic Engagement and Rigor Among Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students,* p. 24. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Background

This strategic plan is designed to nurture a district-wide culture where growth, collaboration, capacity building, and learning leadership shape every facet of our work, no matter how nuanced or mundane (Fullan, 2016). For deep learning to occur in our schools and classrooms, students must feel an enthusiastic sense of ownership of their education and know they are safe and loved when in our care. We must assure parents of their children's safety and our total commitment to their well-being and development and make the district a place where our employees, whether teacher, clerk, cook, or director, feel valued and have voice.

Decades of research have shown the importance of school culture and climate to school transformation and student learning (NRC, 2004). We recognize the district's role in developing culture across our schools and departments is essential. Changing our culture requires changing the way things are done, changing beliefs across NPS, and building a sense of collective purpose to lead us forward. This work requires support, capacity building, and trust throughout the district and with our partners. Over the last year, we implemented training and embarked on partnerships intended to build our capacity to collaborate and strengthen our relationships across the ecosystem

Highlights

→   The Office of Student Life was trained by Dr. Knight on Culturally Relevant Education (CRE).
→   The Office of Student Life embarked on a citywide campaign to provide students with access to precollege programming in the City of Newark.
→   The Office of Student Life worked collaboratively with Creative New Jersey, serving as a host for the 2020 Call 2 Collaborate.
→   The district hosted a Back to School Citywide Backpack event, which included students, families, and community partners. Participated in Census 2020 training, Census Bureau staff manning information tables at Parent Report Card Night (district- wide).

Educating students in today's world shows us that social and technological transformation is rapid, and the problems we confront are global and interdependent. Therefore, it is paramount that our culture is one that comes together around the shared purpose of ensuring the success of our students and the collective understanding that our roles are interdependent. The following strategies will allow us to build a system that continuously leverages our relationships and our expertise to educate our students to their maximum potential.

Strategies

3.1 Communicate a shared vision and plan for developing, supporting, and sustaining positive culture and climate in all classrooms, schools, and departments across the district.

TIMELINE	
2020-2021	Develop a district-wide *Positive Culture Rubric* to guide the transformation of culture throughout the district; and provide professional development in schools and across departments in order to provide all employees and students with a sense of physical and psychological safety, affirmation, and belonging.
2021-2023	Engage stakeholders in school climate improvement using the *Positive Culture Rubric*; and revise district committees, protocols, and surveys based on continuous feedback and walkthroughs.
2023-2025	Assess progress toward a district-wide positive culture using the *Positive Culture Rubric* and report results.
2025-2027	Continue to engage district and school communities in establishing beliefs, rituals, routines, and practices that contribute to a positive culture throughout the organization; and assess progress toward a district-wide positive culture, using the *Positive Culture Rubric*, and report results.
2027-2030	Ensure that schools continue to align district-wide norms and supports with their individual strengths and needs and collaborate within and across schools to share best practices; and assess progress toward a district-wide positive culture, using the *Positive Culture Rubric*, and report results.

3.2 Implement processes and practices that support a collaborative, equity-driven, and responsive culture and promote communication and trust throughout the system.

TIMELINE	
2020-2021	Develop structures for diverse stakeholder groups (teachers, parents, partners, and central office staff) to continue to collaboratively design, implement, and monitor the policies and procedures that shape district culture; support and provide professional development and training to increase collaborative decision-making; and design a "United Culture" campaign that builds on existing programs and practices to promote positive beliefs and messages through various activities at the district and school levels.
2021-2023	Provide resources for schools to continuously develop and refine student-centered practices and learn to use data about school climate; implement the "United Culture" campaign; incorporate educator competencies for social, emotional, and cognitive development, as well as restorative practices, into evaluation for teachers, administrators, and counseling staff; and identify and reward/celebrate employees, students, and partners for exceptional resiliency and acts of community annually.
2023-2025	Assess collaboration across the district; provide internal or external resources necessary to deepen collaborative efforts; publish an electronic newsletter for external partners that highlights their contributions to the district and schools; and adopt metrics to assess collaboration, equity, and responsiveness in district culture.
2025-2027	Update and revise strategy as needed to continue to build a positive culture throughout the district; and continue to assess collaboration, equity, and responsiveness in district culture.
2027-2030	Ensure that collaboration is understood as a core value of the district and is embedded in all facets of the organization; and continue to assess collaboration, equity, and responsiveness in district culture.

3.3 Build the capacity of the Office of Student Life, including all necessary staff and resources, to support the development of positive cultures in all schools and departments.

TIMELINE	
2020-2021	Allocate and deploy resources to the Office of Student Life (including staff, professional development and training, and technology); create the operational infrastructure necessary to provide differentiated, timely, and ongoing support to SLTs and schools; and work with principals to determine their school culture and climate needs and develop culture and climate plans.
2021-2023	Ensure that the Office of Student Life maintains adequate personnel to meet the needs of vulnerable populations (e.g., homeless students and students in protective care); and integrate positive culture and climate strategies and practices into curriculum and instruction frameworks and professional development.
2023-2025	Continue to assist schools in implementing and monitoring positive school culture and climate strategies and practices.
2025-2027	Ensure school leaders, teacher leaders, and parent and student leaders collaboratively monitor school data; conduct informal school walkthroughs and classroom observations to assess climate and culture; and share feedback on the implementation of culture and climate strategies.
2027-2030	Identify and share best practices for developing a positive school culture from across the district.

3.4 Establish an array of ongoing and diverse opportunities for staff, parents, students, and partners to plan for strategies to connect learning to students' lives and promote student learning in the community.

TIMELINE	
2020-2021	Communicate clear and consistent expectations for the integration and engagement of students, families, communities, and partners into district, departmental, and school planning; provide professional development for the Office of Family and Community Engagement, school leaders, parent organizations, and Parent Liaisons on evidence-based models for community engagement; and provide the resources required for the ongoing participation of all stakeholders.
2021-2023	Establish collaboration between the SLTs and Office of Student Life to provide support for principals and schools to broadly engage stakeholders in connecting learning to students' lives and promoting student learning in the community; and collaborate with school communities to identify and implement strategies for connecting learning to students' lives and promoting student learning in the community.
2023-2025	Partner with a local university to provide opportunities for schools, students, and communities to collaborate in research projects addressing educational and social issues (e.g., chronic absenteeism, truancy, and parent engagement); and develop curricula, programs, and events derived from the input of students and communities.
2025-2027	Sponsor a "Community Learning Conference" to bring educators, students, parents, and community partners together for shared learning experiences.
2027-2030	Increase and deepen opportunities to connect learning to students' lives and promote student learning in the community.

3.5 Develop district-wide practices, activities, and norms that promote social and civic responsibility and a district commitment to social justice.

TIMELINE	
2020-2021	Communicate the importance of addressing the social issues directly impacting the conditions in which children live and learn; and develop and act upon a collective strategy to secure the policies and funding necessary to deliver high-quality education.
2021-2023	Train school leaders, parents, and students on models for addressing the social inequities that impact student success in school, including restorative justice and advocacy; and support school leaders to collaboratively identify and address issues directly impacting the students and communities they serve.
2023-2025	Provide opportunities for district teams of diverse stakeholders to participate in national conferences, networks, and other learning opportunities that address educational justice issues.
2025-2027	Implement service learning for high school students.
2027-2030	Engage SLTs, parent organizations, students, and community groups to advocate on behalf of the school and its communities and families to address issues that directly impact the conditions in which children live and learn.

Indicators

Indicators in Priority 3 will measure 1) the collective beliefs and attitudes that are present across the district and partners; 2) shared teaching and learning approaches, behaviors, and expectations; and 3) relationships within or across individuals, departments, schools, and partnerships.

The following **milestones** will signify a major accomplishment in this priority:

- Percentage of school leaders scoring as effective or highly effective on the school culture domain on their annual evaluation increases.
- Percentage of students reporting positive feelings toward school culture increases.
- Percentage of students reporting they know how to find necessary resources when they need support increases.
- Percentage of schools that have a 95% or higher attendance rate increases.
- Percentage of staff attendance rates increase.
- Percentage of students reporting they feel a part of their school increases.
- Student leadership opportunities increase.
- All schools have high-functioning parent organizations.
- Percentage of students reporting they have more positive attitudes about school increases.
- Parental and community participation in district and school events increases.
- Bullying incidents decrease.
- Reports of violence or weapons decrease.
- Positive peer relationships increase.

These **signposts** will show us when the district is headed in the right or wrong direction:

- A defined set of values and principles are widely understood.
- The district models behaviors, attitudes, policies, and structures that facilitate relationship building, trust, and collaboration.
- All employees receive relevant training in developing a positive culture and climate.
- A district-wide Culture and Climate Survey is used.
- Students, staff, and families feel safe.
- Facilities are clean and maintained.
- Trust between faculty and families increases.
- All staff report an increase in collaboration and clear communication.
- School Leadership Councils (SLCs) are in place and trained in all schools.

These **guardrails** will allow for creativity, innovation, and flexibility while preventing the work from going off course:

- A Self-Assessment Process is in place.
- Culture and Climate Walkthroughs are conducted.
- Student Life School Support Coaches are available.

These **equity indicators** will help to measure the district's progress toward the elimination of disparities in educational opportunities, resources, practices, and outcomes in the district:

- All district and school information is available in appropriate languages.
- Alignment and collaboration with community-based organizations conducting social-emotional learning work.
- Communities receive the services they need.
- Policies are in place that support equity and quality audits.
- All students have access to supports at the levels they are needed.

4 Continuous Learning for All

Key Strategies

4.1 Provide the Office of Staff Development and other central office departments the necessary staff and resources to create a district-wide culture of continuous learning and the fiscal support to provide professional development for all employees, both instructional and noninstructional, as well as extended-learning opportunities for parents and guardians.

4.2 Adopt standards for professional development and continuous learning to guide the design, evaluation, and funding of professional and extended-learning opportunities provided to educators, district employees, partners, and families.

4.3 Implement a district-wide Leadership Pipeline to guide the identification, preparation, selection, placement, and retention of school leaders for the Newark Public Schools.

4.4 Create a Professional Development School (PDS) to serve as a strong vehicle for educational change and innovation.

4.5 Continue to implement Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to guide the continuous improvement of learning outcomes for all students.

4.6 Build capacity to provide technology-based professional development and continuous learning opportunities.

4.7 Implement a Parent University that includes a system-wide learning program to provide resources, learning opportunities, and linkages for ongoing parent and family involvement and community engagement that supports student learning.

One of the strongest factors that contributed to…system wide growth involved the development of leaders at all levels – school [and] district…One of the marks of an effective leader is not only the impact that they have on the bottom line of student achievement but also equally how many good leaders they leave behind. Thus, effective leaders choose, mentor, and otherwise develop other leaders. This has two payoffs. In the short run, there is more impact because of a critical mass of leaders who are working in a focused way on the same agenda. In the long term, the impact is even more powerful because these leaders form a critical mass of leaders for the next phase. To put it one way, junior members of a learning organization are being groomed for the future, as they get better in the present. One way of putting it oddly is to say that effective leaders develop teams of leaders and, consequently, if they are successful, become more *dispensable* to their organizations because they have developed a cadre of other leaders who can carry on and go deeper. Whereas if the individual leader is dominant, they leave a vacuum when they depart. Even if they are successful, their impact is superficial because too much depends on them as individuals. The goal is to make yourself dispensable as a leader so you and your organization can go on to further progress.

You should invest in leadership development in others in informal and formal ways. First, collaborative cultures develop leadership naturally within the ongoing culture. Such cultures are learning cultures and, consequentially, are always working on the development of leaders, day-after-day built into the culture itself. In addition to the informal culture, it is necessary to invest in more organized or formal leadership development. The McKinsey & Company report says that "effective CEOs surround themselves with people possessing the diverse skills that a successful organization needs. Social sector leaders seem to recognize this and prioritize it, but their responses suggest that they have not been successful" (p. 3). So, the first order of business is for education leaders to recognize that one of their key roles is to develop the leadership of others—to develop the active bench strength of existing leaders in the organization.

Primarily, this is a normative job. By that, we mean that the leader should establish a learning culture in which many people are expected to develop their leadership skills and help others do the same. Leaders developing other leaders becomes the natural order of the day. In addition, the organization should develop and use other tools to systematically foster leadership in the system. This would include mentoring, coaching, giving feedback, interning, and training in key skills … In our model, the difference is that these more formal strategies do not serve as drivers but as reinforcers of the direction of the organization generated by our four-part Coherence Framework.

Excerpted from Fullan, M. and Quinn, J. (2016). *Coherence: The Right Drivers in Action for Schools, Districts, and Systems*, pp. 134-135. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Background

Our capacity relies on how individuals in the ecosystem use their individual expertise and skills to achieve a shared purpose. Continuous development and learning for all district employees and stakeholders are vital to the future of our district and students. We have adopted a multi-prong strategy to increase the knowledge and skills among all stakeholders needed to ensure we all are prepared to make the changes required to make an impact across NPS. We must ensure that, among parents, teachers, administrators, and partners, there is a shared knowledge about the core practices and strategies the district pursues. We must also provide opportunities for learning about these practices and strategies to be differentiated to particular needs and roles of the stakeholders that comprise our ecosystem. In this way, we will become a Professional Learning Community (PLC), providing appropriate opportunities for learning and collaboration to innovate and address the challenges we face across the ecosystem.

The work of the next decade requires that NPS be a collaborative learning organization. We understand that we cannot learn the same things and do the same things and expect different results. Providing a 21st-century education that prepares our students to be problem-solvers, leaders, and change-agents in their community and the world demands we learn together and use our collective knowledge and insights to change our behavior. This includes our parents and community partners, who bring essential knowledge and different perspectives to the table. With the implementation of *NPS Clarity 2020*, we have taken several steps to reshape how we build and transfer capacity within the district.

Highlights
→ District was selected to participate in The Wallace Foundation's Principal Pipeline.   → PLC Coaching provided by Creative Solutions for 20 principals selected across each School Leadership Team.   → Parent University needs assessment survey was conducted.   → The Offices of Parent Engagement and Special Education collaborated.   → A year-long professional development calendar was created for all professional development offerings from all of the academic offices housed in the Office of Academic Services.

These, and other steps, position NPS to expand our focus on continuous learning for all over the next decade. Going forward, the following strategies will guide our evolution into a collaborative learning organization.

Strategies

4.1 Provide the Office of Staff Development and other central office departments the necessary staff and resources to create a district-wide culture of continuous learning and the fiscal support to provide professional development for all employees, both instructional and noninstructional, as well as extended-learning opportunities for parents and guardians.

TIMELINE	
2020-2021	Design, develop, and implement a research-based plan to systematically provide staff and stakeholders with professional development; ensure the office has the staffing needed to support professional and continuous learning needs system-wide; develop mechanisms to continually evaluate faculty and staff and tailor training programs based on their development need; coordinate with departments to deliver district-wide professional development and training; develop and implement an annual calendar that reflects district-wide priorities as well as opportunities for differentiated professional development and continuous learning for all staff and parents and guardians; and survey parents and guardians to assess continuous learning needs and interests.
2021-2023	Implement district-wide professional development and training initiatives; and expand partnerships to include regional colleges and universities to strengthen professional development and continuing education.
2023-2025	Ensure alignment of professional development activities with employee evaluations and student achievement data; implement a series of digital resource modules to support parent/caregiver engagement in student learning; and expand continuous learning opportunities for parents/caregivers in partnership with community organizations and local colleges and universities.
2025-2027	Evaluate professional development and continuous learning opportunities, and make modifications based on performance data, session evaluations, and other metrics.
2027-2030	Continue to support schools in providing timely, relevant, and data-based professional development to school staff and school-based continuing learning opportunities for parents/caregivers.

4.2 Adopt standards for professional development to guide the design, evaluation, and funding of professional and extended-learning opportunities provided to educators, district employees, partners, and families.

TIMELINE	
2020-2021	Assess professional development activities for alignment with the *New Jersey Professional Development Standards for Educators* and *National Staff Development Council Professional Development Standards*; and create a framework for implementation and progress-monitoring metrics of professional development and continuous learning activities.
2021-2023	Develop and implement a scope and a sequence of professional learning expectations for all staff; create rubrics to guide the development of all professional development and continuous learning opportunities; and facilitate and support best practices for standards-based professional development across the district.
2023-2025	Ensure all external professional development providers and parent support partners operate in alignment with adopted standards and district priorities.
2025-2027	Monitor for evidence that administrative and instructional practices, informed by targeted professional development, are changing actions and improving organizational, school, and student outcomes across and within schools.
2027-2030	Continue to ensure standards-based professional development; and ensure offerings available to district personnel are reviewed and modified as needed with staff input.

4.3 Implement a district-wide Leadership Pipeline to guide the identification, preparation, selection, placement, and retention of school leaders for the district.

TIMELINE	
2020-2021	Adopt leadership standards; partner with college/university on preservice preparation program; identify a project director; revise principal job description; create authentic experiences for candidates; establish a Leader Tracking System (LTS) to provide data for succession planning; prioritize essential Leadership Pipeline elements and their costs; secure/reallocate resources to support the pipeline; establish a process for recommending pipeline candidates; and build stakeholder support for the pipeline.
2021-2023	Review and modify leadership standards to meet district needs; place Leadership Pipeline candidates into existing vacancies; modify central office policies, practices, and procedures in support of the Leadership Pipeline; and survey principals and assistant superintendents to assess the impact of the pipeline.
2023-2025	Ensure all job descriptions are aligned to the standards and explicitly detail responsibility for Leadership Pipeline support; improve/expand the range of data incorporated into the LTS; review authentic experiences for Leadership Pipeline candidates and modify as needed; and assess the quality of support assistant superintendents provide to principals.
2025-2027	Utilize LTS data to assess the efficacy of the preservice preparation program, and make strategic decisions about continuation, modification, or discontinuation; ensure the budget preparation process includes essential Leadership Pipeline elements and no additional funding is required; and annually review/assess Leadership Pipeline functions.
2027-2030	Ensure the process of reviewing and assessing all Leadership Pipeline functions is institutionalized and modifications are informed by data.

4.4 Create a Professional Development School (PDS) to serve as a strong vehicle for educational change and innovation.

TIMELINE	
2020-2021	Research exemplary models of professional development and laboratory schools; establish a district team to conduct site visits and professional learning; and develop a school design plan.
2021-2023	Secure various streams of funding through fundraising, grants, and development opportunities; establish the protocols for formal university partnership; begin PDS development; and determine guidelines, processes, and protocols for the staffing and participation cycle within the PDS.
2023-2025	Begin phase I implementation of PDS; and implement a cycle of data collection, analysis, and action to identify problems of practice across the district, with a focus on targeted job-embedded professional development and coaching in the PDS classroom laboratories.
2025-2027	Assess phase I implementation of PDS; and fully implement and operationalize PDS.
2027-2030	Expand access to PDS to sister districts; create virtual and remote placement opportunities for long distance educator training; and ensure continuity between the PDS and larger district goals.

4.5 Implement Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) with fidelity to guide the continuous improvement of learning outcomes for all students.

TIMELINE	
2020-2021	Connect the central functions of the district (policy, governance, curriculum and instruction, and human resources) to PLCs; bridge school and district-level continuous improvement efforts; build capacity within all PLCs to apply a cycle of continuous improvement to engage in inquiry, action research, data analysis, planning, implementation, reflection, and evaluation; and provide schools the flexibility needed to develop schedules that maximize personnel and reorganize time to allow for effective PLC implementation.
2021-2023	Adopt a district-wide tool for assessing, analyzing, and diagnosing the effectiveness of PLCs; and provide external support, including instructional coaches and mentor teachers, for the implementation of PLCs as needed.
2023-2025	Continuously monitor PLCs; and provide technical assistance and support to teacher leaders and coaches.
2025-2027	Highlight the work of highly effective PLCs across the district; and share best practices across SLTs.
2027-2030	Utilize PLCs to inform problems of practice within the Professional Development School.

4.6 Build capacity to provide technology-based professional development and continuous learning opportunities.

TIMELINE	
2020-2021	Create a district-wide *Professional Development Technology Plan*; and establish and support virtual learning environments that meet the needs of staff, students, and families, including access and training.
2021-2023	Provide training and support for teachers to become competent and confident in using the full range of technology resources to deliver effective curriculum, instruction, and assessment; ensure all schools have technology plans that meet the continuous learning needs of staff, students, and families, including access and training; and coordinate and liaise between school communities and the central office to move to a more integrated physical and virtual learning environment.
2023-2025	Assess the progress of district and school professional development plans annually; and revise as necessary to maintain responsiveness to changing learning needs and social dynamics.
2025-2027	Update district *Professional Development Technology Plan*.
2027-2030	Provide a fully integrated physical and virtual learning environment in every school.

" More ***hands-on learning***, instead of abstract learning."

- Teacher

4.7 Implement a Parent University that includes a system-wide learning program to provide resources, learning opportunities, and linkages for ongoing parent and family involvement and community engagement that supports student learning.

TIMELINE	
2020-2021	Create a district-wide plan to deliver comprehensive learning opportunities to parents/caregivers; identify areas of need and interest; establish partnerships with community organizations and local colleges and universities; secure funding for innovation; adopt standards for family-school partnerships; assess existing programs for alignment with standards; provide research models and best practices for engaging and empowering parents to be partners and advocates for their children; and design an online and virtual learning portal to provide parents, other caregivers, and community members with access to extended and continuing education opportunities.
2021-2023	Implement the Parent University; develop a scope and sequence for training all Family and Community Engagement personnel and Parent Liaisons; create partnerships with institutions of higher education and community organizations to develop learning modules, courses, and certificated programs for parents, other caregivers, and community members; and provide support to schools to develop innovative programming/partnerships for parent/caregivers.
2023-2025	Adopt a train-the-trainer model to develop a corp of "Parents/Caregivers as Teachers" to serve as facilitators and teachers of continuous learning opportunities.
2025-2027	Continue to implement a "Parent/Caregiver as Teacher" model to develop and deliver learning opportunities and resources; assess outcomes; and update the model as necessary.
2027-2030	Provide a comprehensive package of virtual and in-person learning opportunities for parents/caregivers that includes parents/caregivers in planning and delivery.

Indicators

Indicators in Priority 4 will measure the mechanisms (and their impacts) that connect all actors in the ecosystem to education, training, and resources that increase their knowledge and capacity to provide high-quality learning opportunities for students, enrich students' education and support social-emotional development, and academic success while preparing students for the future. (Families are connected to education, training, and resources aimed at increasing their access to employment, and educational attainment.)

The following **milestones** will signify a major accomplishment in this priority:

- Percentage of staff reporting that professional development sessions relate directly to their needs and improve their job performance increases.
- Percentage of staff meeting professional development goals (PDGs) increases.
- Percentage of staff reporting that professional development has increased their leadership opportunities increases.
- Percentage of parents/caregivers engaging in continuous learning opportunities increases.

> " Provide peer-learning where *students* should *help each other*."
>
> *- Student*

These **signposts** will show us when the district is headed in the right or wrong direction:

- An array of professional development opportunities directly related to high-need areas identified in employee evaluation data are in place.
- Micro-credentials are integrated into professional development to provide all staff, including teachers, the resources and support they need in order to fulfill the criteria and demonstrate mastery.
- An annual catalogue of differentiated continuous learning opportunities for parents/guardians is published.
- The district Professional Development School is complete and operational.
- Parent Convocation is implemented.
- All staff is supported and provided relevant training.
- Leadership training for all school and district leadership is available.

These **guardrails** will allow for creativity, innovation, and flexibility while preventing the work from going off-course:

- In measuring the effectiveness of professional development both quantitative and qualitative instruments and mixed methods are utilized.
- University Partnerships are in place to support professional development opportunities and evaluate effectiveness.
- Professional development activities demonstrate techniques and activities that are inclusive of and responsive to diverse cultural practices.

These **equity indicators** will help to measure the district's progress toward the elimination of disparities in educational opportunities, resources, practice, and outcomes in the district:

- All content areas and departments are supported to meet student needs.
- Access to information and opportunities is widely available.
- Professional development and continuous learning opportunities are responsive to reliable data about interests and needs.

Integrated System of Supports

Key Strategies

5.1 Ensure the continuous alignment of the Office of Student Life and school-based Student Support Teams (SSTs) with best practices, research, and policy for comprehensive student supports.

5.2 Build and strengthen capacity across the district to provide an array of student support services and to continuously plan for, implement, and evaluate student supports in schools and at the district level.

5.3 Implement prevention and early intervention strategies that include a full continuum of services to address the basic needs of all students in classrooms and schools in order to decrease the need for higher-level services.

5.4 Strengthen and amplify specialized assistance, crisis, and emergency support, including procedures and services necessary for crisis and emergency situations and specialized assistance programs for students and families with intensive special needs.

5.5 Support student transitions to minimize interruptions in student learning, including transition plans for new students, grade- level transitions, students returning from juvenile facilities, special education students, and school transfers.

5.6 Collaborate with community stakeholders to implement the *Healthy and Ready to Learn Plan* to ensure immunizations, physicals, and other health and child development screenings are up to date, children are meeting developmental milestones, and early childhood needs are being addressed with high-quality interventions and care.

Comprehensive approaches to student and learning supports involve much more than enhancing availability and access to health and social services or limiting the focus to any other piecemeal and ad hoc initiatives for addressing barriers to learning, development, and teaching.

Just as efforts to enhance instruction emphasize well-delineated and integrated curriculum content, so must efforts to address external and internal factors that interfere with students engaging effectively with that curriculum. At schools, the content (or curriculum) for addressing a full range of interfering factors can be coalesced into six classroom and school-wide arenas. These focus on:

1. Enhancing regular classroom strategies to enable learning (e.g., improving instruction for students who have become disengaged from learning at school and for those with mild-moderate learning and behavior problems);
2. Supporting transitions (e.g., assisting students and families as they negotiate school and grade changes and many other transitions);
3. Increasing home and school connections;
4. Responding to, and, where feasible, preventing crises;
5. Increasing community involvement and support (outreaching to develop greater community involvement and support, including enhanced use of volunteers); and
6. Facilitating student and family access to effective services and special assistance as needed.

The complexity of factors interfering with learning, development, and teaching underscore the need to coalesce efforts to address the variety of factors that interfere with a school accomplishing its mission. A number of institutional indicators and evidence from pioneering work on moving in new directions to enhance student and learning supports all herald a paradigm shift supporting development of a comprehensive system encompassing the scope and content outlined above.

Excerpted from: Adelman and Taylor, (2015). *Transforming Student and Learning Supports: Developing a Unified, Comprehensive, and Equitable System.* Los Angeles, CA: The Center for Mental Health in Schools and Student/Learning Supports, School Mental Health Project in the Department of Psychology, UCLA.

Background

Learning does not take place in isolation. Our students, families, teachers, and district employees are all affected by our communities' conditions and the world. There is a complex interaction between social reality and the learning that takes place in schools and classrooms. While research has long documented the impact of the environment on schools and education, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on our community has made this relationship more acute in unprecedented ways (Coleman, 1966; Comer, 1995; Oakes, et al., 2017; and Rothstein, 2004). The need for a comprehensive district-wide approach to addressing the social and emotional needs of our students, families, and employees is heightened.

We must continue to weave together a tapestry of resources and opportunities that support students' and their families' basic needs, for example, access to food and health care.

The implementation of *NPS Clarity 2020* has yielded vital partnerships and training to support children and families. Additionally, as a result of remote learning, we have identified and responded to a variety of academic, behavioral, and social-emotional learning needs by providing resources and making referrals virtually. We have implemented trauma-informed training, received grants to support social-emotional learning, and mapped resources in and across our schools. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated our work to design universal student supports as a core function of the district.

Highlights

→ Received two grants to support social-emotional learning and Trauma Informed Schools: Project Prevent Newark and Supportive Schools.

→ Implemented trauma-informed programs via Fairleigh Dickinson University and United Behavioral Health Clinic/Newark Beth Israel Hospital, and Columbia University Teachers College.

→ Mapped resources for all schools through the district website and Google for trauma, grief, protocols, and procedures as they relate to home instruction, Intervention Referral Services and working papers.

→ Met with City of Newark Department of Health and Community Wellness and Rutgers University-Newark to discuss and strategically plan early intervention for pregnancy.

→ The Office of Student Life staff participated in a national professional development conference to learn about various mentoring programs and best practices throughout the nation.

As we continue this work, the district will amplify our capacity to proactively assist our students and families address the impacts of stressful and traumatic events and prioritize prevention. We will also continue to develop support and wellness opportunities and programs for our employees and educators with their input. The strategies identified below guide how we will develop an integrated support system that promotes wellness and achievement across our system.

Strategies

5.1 Ensure the continuous alignment of the Office of Student Life and school-based Student Support Teams (SSTs) with best practices, research, and policy for comprehensive student supports.

TIMELINE	
2020-2021	Develop a district-wide policy and implement an evidence-based framework for providing student supports; create a handbook for SSTs that is aligned to the New Jersey Tiered System of Supports and *Social-Emotional Learning State Standards*; coordinate community- and school-based supports and services to target both academic and nonacademic barriers to learning; and communicate consistently and routinely about the importance of student supports.
2021-2023	Use data analysis, student, parent, and staff surveys, and other measures to regularly assess student and school needs; and provide resources that are responsive to the diverse and multifaceted needs that exist across schools and communities.
2023-2025	Revise the *Student Support Services Rubric* to assist in the identification and selection of effective programs and partners; and assess the implementation of the district policy and framework for student supports.
2025-2027	Align evidence-based programs to indicators and target populations; and scale programs to serve more students and families based on continued needs assessments.
2027-2030	Continue to facilitate coordination between schools and the Office of Student Life and provide ongoing support to align district resources with school needs; and conduct a 10-year assessment of district policy and framework for student supports.

5.2 Build and strengthen capacity across the district to provide an array of student support services and to continuously plan for, implement, and evaluate student supports in schools and at the district level.

TIMELINE	
2020-2021	Dedicate the resources, personnel, and structures to provide ongoing training and professional development for all necessary district and school personnel; deploy a coaching model for all school- based student support staff, including school counselors, social workers, attendance counselors, security guards, and classroom aides; and develop an annual calendar that reflects ongoing and meaningful student support programs, resources, and opportunities.
2021-2023	Intensify collaboration between district, schools, and youth-serving agencies to provide a comprehensive system of student supports; establish the protocols necessary for implementation; ensure collaboration within and across schools to coordinate resources and partnerships in order to address collective needs; increase the awareness of all stakeholders of the programs and services available with the district and across the ecosystem; and design and pilot a student support evaluation instrument.
2023-2025	Continue to dedicate the resources, personnel, and structures to provide ongoing training and professional development for all necessary district and school personnel; conduct a five-year assessment of implementation of the coaching model for all school-based student support staff and collaboration between district, schools, and youth-serving agencies; and update policies, procedures, protocols, and professional development as necessary based on findings.
2025-2027	Evaluate student support programs and partnerships; adjust and modify as necessary according to the data; align evidence-based programs to indicators and target populations and scale programs to serve more students and families; ensure professional development plans for school staff include professional learning goals that address student supports and provide differentiated opportunities for capacity building based on role; and support coordination and integration of resources within and across schools to avoid duplication, fill gaps, promote scale and effectiveness, blend funding, share information, and establish networks of support.
2027-2030	Continue to engage district and school communities in identifying school- and community-based needs that affect student learning and develop plans to implement school-wide student supports; and scale evidence-based programs, partnerships, and resources.

5.3 Implement prevention and early intervention strategies that include a full continuum of services to address the basic needs of all students in classrooms and schools in order to decrease the need for higher-level services.

TIMELINE	
2020-2021	Establish a Prevention and Early Intervention Team; assist schools in implementing prevention and early intervention systems and strategies; identify emerging areas of need across schools and the district; assist schools to address barriers to learning and re-engage disconnected students; and provide training to utilize accommodations and prevention programs systematically as early interventions.
2021-2023	Create a policy and template for the implementation of Individual Student Learning plans for all students that begin when students enter school and follow each student through high school graduation; and continuously monitor and assess school- and student-level data and implement prevention strategies for students at-risk of chronic absenteeism, truancy, and/or credit deficiency.
2023-2025	Monitor implementation of Individualized Learning Plans for students identified by Student Support and Intervention and Referral Services teams with fidelity; and continue to build meaningful relationships among students, staff, and family through programs such as Mentoring, Project Prevent, and Supportive Schools.
2025-2027	Incorporate prevention and early intervention into the instructional framework of the Professional Development School (PDS).
2027-2030	Maintain a district-wide focus on the importance of intervening early and often.

5.4 Strengthen and amplify specialized assistance, crisis, and emergency support, including procedures and services necessary for crisis and emergency situations and specialized assistance programs for students and families with intensive special needs.

TIMELINE	
2020-2021	Implement consistent policies and procedures for reporting, documenting, and analyzing crisis and emergency data; update all schools' crisis and emergency plans; ensure all schools have crisis and emergency response teams in place; conduct annual training on crisis and emergency preparedness; and ensure the availability and viability of emergency support resources for students and families.
2021-2023	Develop a digital resource platform for parents/caregivers and district employees; streamline the referral process and communication between partners and schools; align and monitor care coordination and case management services across schools to provide consistent, equitable, and timely delivery in all schools; and create opportunities for resource sharing.
2023-2025	Expand district training in trauma-informed care; expand educator training in best practices for virtual learning platforms; and increase resources and supports for teachers and other district employees.
2025-2027	Update crisis and emergency plans in light of community, public health, and vital sources of data.
2027-2030	Maintain ongoing communication and coordination between Office of Emergency Management, public health offices, and city, county, and state agencies; and continuously update crisis and emergency plans.

5.5 Support student transitions to minimize interruptions in student learning, including transition plans for new students, grade-level transitions, students returning from juvenile facilities, special education students, and school transfers.

TIMELINE	
2020-2021	Develop a district-wide policy that supports a continuum of transition needs; identify and remediate persistent systemic barriers to successful student transitions; and establish a transition protocol that is reviewed and updated annually based on student and school data.
2021-2023	Ensure transition procedures are in place to assist students to move within and between schools, between programs, and between school and community programs; establish programs, partnerships, and procedures to facilitate transitions to higher education and postsecondary employment and careers; provide training for parents/caregivers about the importance of transitions; and ensure parents/caregiver understand the learning and social-emotional expectations across the preschool to high school continuum.
2023-2025	Continue to identify and remediate persistent systemic barriers to successful student transitions.
2025-2027	Evaluate the impact of transition supports on the progress of vulnerable and high-risk students; and update policies, programs, and procedures as needed.
2027-2030	Ensure a district-wide focus on the importance of focused and targeted transition supports for students and families; and update policies, programs, and procedures as needed.

5.6 Collaborate with community stakeholders to implement the *Healthy and Ready to Learn Plan* to ensure immunizations, physicals, and other health and child development screenings are up to date, children are meeting developmental milestones, and early childhood needs are being addressed with high-quality interventions and care.

TIMELINE	
2020-2021	Convene the Early Childhood Advisory Council; begin implementation of the Conception to Grade 3 Consortium; review preschool program implementation; and support transitions as children move from preschool through grade 3.
2021-2023	Collaborate with healthcare providers, service organizations and other community partners; continue the Conception to Grade 3 Consortium with a focus on students entering school healthy, ready to learn, and access to extended-learning experiences that support students reading by grade 3; develop a funding strategy that blends and braids funding streams; pool resources to support a unified set of program services for children ages 0 to 3; and implement best practices in supporting teen parents.
2023-2025	Continue to convene the Early Childhood Advisory Council to review preschool program implementation; maintain support for transitions from preschool through grade 3; and provide more comprehensive, inclusive services to children ages 0 to 3 and their caregivers.
2025-2027	Assess the impact of the Conception to Grade 3 Consortium on preschool readiness; modify and refine programs and partnerships based on assessment data; and expand the Advisory Council to include grades 5 through 8.
2027-2030	Scale evidence-based programs, partnerships, and resources; and expand the Advisory Council to include high school.

Indicators

Indicators in Priority 5 will measure students', families', and employees' connections to services and resources that 1) mitigate barriers to learning and academic success, 2) support the healthy development of students, and 3) increase academic performance.

The following **milestones** will signify a major accomplishment in this priority:

- Percentage of students reporting they feel they belong in school increases.
- Percentage of students reporting they are more confident about their ability to succeed in school increases.
- Percentage of availability of in-school and after-school programs increases.
- Percentage of attendance at before- and after-school programs increases.
- The perception of schools as open to community increases.
- Number of partnerships in place for service learning in the school/community increases.
- Percentage of students and families reporting they are connected to needed services increases.
- Student suspension rate decreases.
- Number days lost to suspension decreases.
- Disproportionality in student suspensions decreases.
- Percentage of students entering school ready to learn increases.

These **signposts** will show us when the district is headed in the right or wrong direction:

- Annual needs assessment is conducted to identify academic and nonacademic supports for students.
- An Early Warning System is in place to prevent crisis and more intensive interventions.
- Social-Emotional Learning Indicators are in place district-wide.
- All schools have a staff person dedicated to coordinating school and student supports.
- The Consortium Advisory Council is expanding to include all grades.

These **guardrails** will allow for creativity, innovation, and flexibility while preventing the work from going off-course:

- Progress-monitoring (student progress, programs, initiatives, and partnerships).
- Alignment and collaboration with community-baed organizations doing social-emotional learning work.
- District-wide evaluation tool for transitions.
- Students have the needed academic support.
- Internships and mentorships are in place for all students grades 6-12.
- Relationships with reentry programs for students already in the system.
- Student Learning Plans and Post-Secondary Plans in place for all students.
- Internships/Mentoring mandatory for students in grades 6-12.

These **equity indicators** will help to measure the district's progress toward the elimination of disparities in educational opportunities, resources, practice, and outcomes in the district:

- Opportunities for families are differentiated.
- Alignment of community services/agencies workshops and resources to prevent duplication.
- All students have access to district social-emotional learning curriculum.
- All students have access to supports at the levels they are needed.

<table>
<tr><td>PRIORITY</td><td>6</td><td>Strong Reciprocal Partnerships</td></tr>
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Key Strategies

6.1 Establish and staff the Office of Strategic Partnerships to enhance the district's and schools' engagement with the many external organizations that provide resources, programs, and supports to schools and students.

6.2 Implement a partnership framework that communicates a vision for mutually beneficial and accountable partnerships, strengthens relational ties, and integrates partnership evaluation.

6.3 Create a public "Children, Youth, and Families Compact" identifying common goals and formalizing shared commitment across the ecosystem to collectively attain the identified goals.

6.4 Develop and implement a strategy for collaboration with local and national philanthropic organizations.

The Benefits of School-Community Partnerships

When schools and community organizations work together to support learning, everyone benefits. Partnerships can serve to strengthen, support, and even transform individual partners, resulting in improved program quality, more efficient use of resources, and better alignment of goals and curricula (Harvard Family Research Project, 2010).

First and foremost, learning partnerships can support student outcomes (see, for example, Little, Wimer, & Weiss, 2008). For example, the Massachusetts Afterschool Research Study found that afterschool programs with stronger relationships with school teachers and principals were more successful at improving students' homework completion, homework effort, positive behavior, and initiative. This may be because positive relationships with schools can foster high quality, engaging, and challenging activities, along with promoting staff engagement (Miller, 2005).

In addition to supporting student learning directly, partnerships can have additional benefits to students and their families. They can:
- provide continuity of services across the day and year, easing school transitions and promoting improved attendance in after school programs;
- facilitate access to a range of learning opportunities and developmental supports, providing opportunities for students and teachers alike to experiment with new approaches to teaching and learning;
- facilitate information sharing about specific students to best support individual learning; and
- provide family members with alternative entry points into the school day to support their student's learning.

Learning partnerships can also greatly benefit schools. They can:
- complement the academic curriculum with a wider range of services and activities, particularly enrichment and arts activities that may not be available during the school day;
- support transitions across the school years, particularly the critical middle to high school transition, which research indicates is a key predictor of high school graduation (Neild, Balfanz, & Herzog, 2007);
- reinforce concepts taught in school without replicating the school day, often exposing classroom teachers working in the after school program to new pedagogies; improve school culture and community image through exhibitions and performances that help "shine the light" on students whose talents may not be apparent in the classroom; and
- gain access to mentors, afterschool staff, and other resources to support in school learning and improve the teaching and learning in the classroom itself.

Finally, learning partnerships with schools can strengthen and support community partners.

They can:
- help gain access to and recruit groups of students most in need of support services;
- improve program quality and staff engagement, particularly when there is crossover between school and community organization staff;
- foster better alignment of programming to support a shared vision for learning, one which aligns curriculum to support state and local standards; and
- maximize resource use such as facilities, staff, data, and curriculum.

Little, P. (2011). Expanded learning opportunities in Washington state: Pathways to student success. Retrieved from http://www.schoolsoutwashington.org/UserFiles/File/ELO%20Policy%20Brief%20 Single%20Pages.pdf

Background

Mobilizing all of our ecosystem's assets is key to ensuring every child enters our schools ready to learn and is prepared for college, career, and citizenship when they graduate. We know from experience that partnership matters. Our partnerships with community organizations, local businesses, colleges and universities, hospitals, and city agencies support student learning through innovative programs at our high school academies, mentoring, dual-enrollment programs, counseling, and technology. Partnerships allow the district to better meet the needs of our students, their families, and our schools and expand service provision and the opportunities available to them. Working in partnership also gives our families and partners greater capacity to understand students' learning needs and increases their ability to mitigate the barriers students face.

The strategies included in *NPS Clarity 2020* have intensified our focus on results-focused partnerships that work toward clear outcomes for the students, families, and schools they serve (Jacosbson & Blank, 2015). Through a partnership audit and review at the district and school level, we have been able to assess existing partnerships for alignment with our goals and priorities and establish new agreements that hold our partnerships accountable for strategically aligning with our needs.

Highlights
→ Assessed partner alignment with district and school needs and goals. → Posted selected grant awards on the district website and updated grants management handbook. → Provide ongoing engagement with parochial, private, and charter schools. → Engaged external partners, including City of Newark and universities and colleges, to plan for extended-learning opportunities for all students in grades 6-12, including virtual enrichment.

While NPS regularly collaborates with countless organizations in a variety of ways, we understand partnership to mean joining forces in pursuit of a shared goal. During the next decade, we will increase the alignment of our partnership goals with district and school needs. As we do this, we will develop a partnership framework that refines our policies and integrates evaluation tools into this process.

Strategies

6.1 Establish and staff the Office of Strategic Partnerships to enhance the district's and schools' engagement with the many external organizations that provide resources, programs, and supports to schools and students.

TIMELINE	
2020-2021	Identify executive-level leadership to support partnerships; research how other school districts coordinate partners to better understand best practices; solicit feedback from current and past partners on their experience with the district and schools; develop a *Strategic Partnership Plan* to coordinate partners and volunteer resources; and align partners with the goals and priorities of the strategic plan.
2021-2023	Implement the *Strategic Partnership Plan*; support departments and schools to develop strategic partnership plans; solicit feedback from schools and partners for training and resources needed to coordinate and strengthen partnerships; provide centrally located information and resources to support school-based partnerships; provide opportunities for relationship-building between partners and school stakeholders; and collaborate with partnership offices in sister districts.
2023-2025	Launch district-wide Inaugural Partnership Conference to advance best practices.
2025-2027	Assess the impact of the Office of Strategic Partnerships on district and school priorities and partnerships; and update the *Strategic Partnership Plan*.
2027-2030	Host Second district-Wide Partnership Conference to advance best practices.

" There is a system-wide process for providing all students with access to internships, apprenticeships, and college preparation in place."

- Partner Roundtable

6.2 Implement a partnership framework that communicates a vision for mutually beneficial and accountable partnerships, strengthens relational ties, and integrates partnership evaluation.

TIMELINE	
2020-2021	Adopt research-based partnership standards, rubrics, checklists, and assessment tools; develop district policies, guides, and resources for partnership development; standardize partnership procedures and processes (memorandums of understanding (MOU), monitoring, assessment, and reporting); conduct a comprehensive, data-driven assessment of school-wide needs and assets; and use district-level partnership inventory to assess whether the distribution of partnerships across schools is equitable.
2021-2023	Train schools and partners on the district partnership framework; assist schools with setting partnership performance targets; provide training and resources on data sharing and confidentiality requirements for school partners and volunteers; facilitate conversations and collaboration among schools working with the same organization; and support schools to recruit new partnerships.
2023-2025	Ensure school and partner goals are aligned; and survey schools and partners about the district framework.
2025-2027	Review and reflect upon data to inform partnership and programming decisions; and update partnership framework as needed based on data and changes in the environment.
2027-2030	Ensure the Office of Strategic Partnerships is integrated into city, county, and state cross-sector initiatives and collaborations.

6.3 Create a public "Children, Youth, and Families Compact" identifying common goals and formalizing shared commitment across the ecosystem to collectively attain the identified goals.

TIMELINE	
2020-2021	Create a high-level steering committee to generate broad participation and ownership over the compact development process; and identify financial resources to manage the compact development process effectively.
2021-2023	Convene stakeholders from across the city to establish 1) shared goals, 2) agreed-upon metrics, and 3) roles and responsibilities; and establish MOUs and data-sharing agreements where necessary.
2023-2025	Launch "Children, Youth, and Families Compact" public data dashboard.
2025-2027	Collaborate with compact signers to host a citywide "Children, Youth, and Families Compact" Summit; assess progress toward goals and metrics; and update "Children, Youth, and Families Compact."
2027-2030	Continue to implement "Children, Youth, and Families Compact;" and expand compact signatories.

6.4 Develop and implement a strategy for collaboration with local and national philanthropic organizations.

TIMELINE	
2020-2021	Hire a Philanthropic Liaison; collaborate with the Education Funders Group to align funding and district priorities; expand relationships with New Jersey philanthropic organizations; and develop a comprehensive funding strategy.
2021-2023	Participate in national conferences; and network with national philanthropies.
2023-2025	Assess implementation of comprehensive funding strategy; identify gaps in resources; and collaborate with philanthropy to identify local and national resources.
2025-2027	Continue to expand philanthropic networks; and identify and apply for national philanthropic opportunities aligned with district priorities.
2027-2030	Ensure and maintain alignment of philanthropic resources with district priorities and needs.

Indicators

Indicators in Priority 6 will measure 1) the processes, procedures, and policies in place to develop, implement, and assess partnerships and 2) the impact and effectiveness of partnerships.

The following **milestones** will signify a major accomplishment in this priority:

- All schools have a designated person located at the school-level to lead the coordination of school–community partnerships.
- Percentage of partners reporting increased collaboration with the district and schools increases.
- Percentage of schools reporting partners have helped to improve student outcomes increases.
- Percentage of students served by partners reporting the program/service/activity met their need increases.
- Percentage of parents reporting the program/service/activity met their child's need increases.
- Percentage of partnerships with MOUs in place increases.

These **signposts** will show us when the district is headed in the right or wrong direction:

- A published partnership inventory for schools, partners, and families.
- Clear metrics and evaluative methods are in place to hold the district and partners accountable for partnership goals.
- Redundancy and duplication of services and programs decreases.
- Alignment between NPS and City of Newark youth priorities.

These **guardrails** will allow for creativity, innovation, and flexibility while preventing the work from going off-course:

- Partnerships align with the logic model.
- Partnerships are outcome driven.
- Partnership activities demonstrate techniques that are inclusive of and responsive to diverse cultural practices.
- A Partnership Perception Survey is regularly administered.

These **equity indicators** will help to measure the district's progress toward the elimination of disparities in educational opportunities, resources, practice, and outcomes in the district.

- Partnerships provide the services students, schools, and communities need for students to be successful learners.
- Consistency of care, dignity, and respect of partnerships is present across all schools.
- All schools have access to the partners and programs they need.
- Partnerships address the areas of greatest need.

Appendix I: Policy Snapshots

Nurturing High Intellectual Performances in ALL Students

Yvette Jackson, Ed.D., Adjunct Professor, Teachers College, Columbia University

Scholastic Impediments to the Development of High Intellectual Performances

For far too many years, the federal government has used a punitive approach to address underperformance in urban schools, labeling them (and their students) failures and mandating adherence to oppressive directives and prescriptive "remedial" type programs with a restrictive focus on "weaknesses." This approach (spawned by a lack of belief in both students and teachers) has subjugated schools into continuous spirals of underachievement, with the monumental potential of students being squandered.

Research specifically elucidates that weakness-based approaches are not only the antithesis of what is needed to stimulate intellectual development and learning, but they perpetuate scholastic inequity. In the cognitive domain, prescribed remedial, unenriched, decontextualized instruction results in arrested growth in reading (and consequentially learning and achievement across the disciplines) for an inordinate number of students of color (Hess & Henig, 2008; Yatvin, 2003). The absence of enrichment or contextualized instruction causes short circuits to occur in the cultural anchors needed for cognitive functioning.

In the neurobiological domain, this deleterious impact on learning is compounded by the positional or marginalizing language associated with labeling students. These labels incite high levels of stress in these students (who are well aware of their negative connotations), hindering the development of neural patterns that make the learning process more efficient and expansive, inhibiting comprehension, and causing regions of the brain associated with executive decision-making and goal-directed behaviors to degenerate. These repercussions are impediments to the development of the dispositions, habits of mind, and growth mindset upon which cognition, high intellectual performances, and self-determination rely (Jackson, 2016).

The effect inequitable practices and labels have had on underachievement is staggering, but not irreversible. Cognitive and neuroscience research have substantiated that underachievement can, in fact, be mitigated with the type of practices and opportunities provided in "gifted" education, such as: enrichment; opportunities to demonstrate and build strengths; supports to address underdeveloped or impaired cognitive functioning; strategies for developing critical thinking and stimulating intellectual development; and experiences that build the dispositions needed for engaged, competent, and confident learning (Feuerstein, 2006; Feuerstein et al., 2010; Hilliard, 1977; Medina, 2008; Sternberg, 1998).

Promoting "Gifted" Education" for Each and Every Student – The Pedagogy of Confidence®

At this critical juncture in time, when hope and inspiration are so needed to revitalize the original spirit of education - to draw out the potential of each and every student so they can be self-determined and make vital contributions to our society - what is needed is promoting the philosophy of "gifted" education that affirms belief in the unlimited potential of each and every student and maps a direction for pedagogy that intentionally and explicitly engages and nurtures that potential. (Gifted education is distinguished from exclusive programs for students "labeled as gifted"). This is the time to boldly write a new transformative narrative for ALL students, a narrative that reflects the cognitive and neuroscience research that has proven that intelligence is not only modifiable but can be expressed by students as high intellectual performances when they are provided with thought-provoking, inspiring environments and motivating mediation through high-level learning practices (Piaget, 1950; Feuerstein, 1980, 2006; Medina, 2008). In this transformative narrative, students are "gifted" with pedagogy in which:

1. high expectations for their ability drive the direction, instructional choices, and opportunities available to them;
2. the pedagogy they experience is actually designed as invitations for them to explore the "frontier of their intelligence" - their innate capital;
3. practices, strategies, and opportunities are designed to generate, identify, and cultivate their unique strengths, gifts, and talents; and
4. the invitations they receive through the pedagogy they receive are complemented by guidance on how to apply the discoveries they make about their intelligence so they can better determine what they want to pursue to feel self-actualized and to experience agency and investment in society.

This "gifted" approach is what is defined as the *Pedagogy of Confidence®* (Jackson, 2011).

When teachers practice the *Pedagogy of Confidence*, they do not doubt the potential of their culturally different student. Using an equity-conscious lens, they switch their instructional focus from what has to be taught to how to optimize student learning so their potential can thrive and flourish.

Nurturing High Intellectual Development through High Operational Practices®

Pedagogy of Confidence is an approach to learning and teaching that is based on the fearless expectation that all students are capable of high intellectual performances when provided High Operational Practices™ that steer teachers through behaviors for inspiring and nurturing expansive cognition, self-directed learning, and academic goal orientation (Jackson, 2011).

The High Operational Practices include:

- Identifying and activating student strengths
- Building relationships
- Eliciting high intellectual performances
- Providing enrichment
- Integrating prerequisites for academic learning
- Situating learning in the lives of students
- Amplifying student voice (Jackson, 2011)

These practices are the fulcrum around which the Pedagogy of Confidence revolves, gearing the objectives for each practice to guide students to explore and act on their potential to produce high intellectual performances.

These performances demonstrate to students (and their teachers) the propensity of their brains for high levels of learning growth which, in turn, motivates self-directed learning and self-determination for pursuing academic achievement and personal success. When an entire district is committed to high intellectual performances from each and every student, the range of knowledge, strengths, and achievement of its students increases exponentially, reversing a downward academic trend to an upward trajectory of academic achievement with metrics indicative of high intellectual performances.

Policy Recommendations

Create a Vision Statement and Strategic Plan that Explicitly Articulates Belief in the Innate Potential of ALL Students for High Intellectual Performances

Establishing high intellectual performances as the goal for each and every student requires a vision statement and strategic plan that signals the new district narrative of belief in and the value of the innate potential of all the district's students. This vision statement should paint a picture that enables staff, students, and the community to recognize the direction the district is taking to ensure the development of high intellectual performances in its students. Such a vision statement of belief explicitly delineates the specific student attributes the system pledges to develop, the commitments it will keep for developing these attributes, and its core programmatic principles expressed to direct the design of pedagogy through which these attributes can be cultivated. The strategic plan should align with the vision statement of belief, conveying bold, articulated goals that indicate that well-defined actions must be taken at every school to ensure that "gifted" type education is the norm for all students.

The vision statement and strategic plan also indicate that policies, curricula, programs, assessment, and professional learning experiences reflective of low expectations or "othering" are no longer permissible (Jackson, 2011).

Provide Professional Learning in the Science of Learning

Bringing a vision into fruition built upon the belief in and the value of the innate potential of all students requires professional learning in the science of learning to develop the awareness of district instructional staff and epistemology of teachers around the propensity of all brains for high intellectual performances. This professional learning substantiates the efficacy of the High Operational Practices and guides teachers in making the most effective pedagogical choices to optimize student engagement, higher-order thinking, accelerated learning, and the demonstration of high intellectual performances. For district instructional staff, professional learning in the science of learning should generate the curriculum, assessment, and opportunities for actualizing the vision of belief and district strategic plan.

Promote Equity-Conscious Communities of Belonging at Each School

Communities of Belonging deliberately intervene in the lives of their students and teachers by creating an environment where equity- driven, "gifted" Pedagogy of Confidence can flourish, where strengths are the primary targets of cultivation, and where intellectual growth is optimized. The driving intention of the Community of Belonging is to mitigate the impact of factors that are impediments to learning and high intellectual performances for students. Communities of Belonging are mobilized to cultivate for each and every student and teacher a sense of affiliation (connection), value (affirmation of strengths and appreciation of personal culture), agency (authentic input and co-creation) and investment (ownership). In Communities of Belonging teachers create opportunities for student input through authentic collaboration in such things as professional learning sessions focused on the science of learning, building leadership teams, student-led report card conferences, town hall meetings, teacher-student committees, co-created inquiry projects (students with staff), and participation in the design of school standards for academic and social behavior. These opportunities encourage student investment in creating a shared culture, facilitate bridges between students and teachers, and develop the currency of academic language.

Make Personalized Learning an Inherent Component of Learning and Teaching

Personalized learning enables students at all grade levels to apply their strengths and interests through extended investigations, applications of learning, collaborative productions, and authentic contributions to their classes, school, and beyond. It elicits and operationalizes students' insights and strengths as bridges from themselves to understanding concepts of the various disciplines, and from these understandings to the world. Personalized learning inspires students to demonstrate that they have both the intellectual capacity and dispositions to act on their insights. It is a generative vehicle for implementing the High Operational Practices, putting a spotlight on identifying and activating student strengths and high intellectual performances, situating learning in students' lives and capitalizing on their cultural frames of reference, exposing students to enrichment that reflects their interests and strengths, motivating students to investigate and build prerequisite learning, amplifying student voice, cultivating students' personal agency, and committing to academic achievement.

Resource Equity for Deeper Learning

Excerpted from Pedro Noguera, Ph.D., Linda Darling-Hammond, Ph.D., and Diane Friedlaender, Ph.D. (2015). *Equal Opportunity for Deeper Learning.* **Students at the Center: Deeper Learning Research Series. Boston, MA: Jobs for the Future.**

Resource Equity for Deeper Learning

Educational equity is the policies and practices that ensure that every student has access to an education focused on meaningful learning (e.g., that teaches the deeper learning skills contemporary society requires in ways that empower students to learn independently), taught by competent and caring educators who are able to attend to the student's social and academic needs, and supported by adequate resources that provide the materials and conditions for effective learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2014). Equity-based reforms in teaching and learning will be central to the effort to expand access to deeper learning.

To the degree that deeper learning remains unavailable to students of color and children of low-income families, America will never be able to solve its equity dilemma. The evidence is clear: students will only acquire the skills to be truly college and career ready if they have access to a higher-level curriculum.

In a recent report to the U.S. Secretary of Education entitled *For Each and Every Child: A Strategy for Educational Equity and Excellence* (2013), the National Commission on Excellence and Equity documented these widespread disparities and defined an equity agenda to address the following needs:

- the need to restructure the school finance system to ensure equitable distribution of resources;

- the need to ensure access to quality teachers;
- the need to ensure access to high-quality early childhood education;
- the need for external supports to address the social needs of children; and
- the need for a new accountability system to hold policy makers responsible for conditions within schools.

To ensure equity in access to deeper learning, practices, and policies must address the context of education both outside and inside schools. To enable low-income students to learn deeply and successfully, schools that serve them must offer a high-quality instructional experience and the wraparound services that can help ameliorate the stressful conditions they experience in their communities.

Environmental Influences on Education

Educators have long understood that environmental factors—related to family background, peer groups, neighborhood conditions, and more—influence the health, nutrition, safety, and overall psychological and emotional well-being of young people, which, in turn, affect their development and learning (Rothstein, 2004).

As numerous studies have shown, family income and parental education are two of the strongest predictors of student achievement and educational attainment (Coleman et al., 1966; Goldhaber et al., 1999; Jencks, 1972; Jencks & Phillips, 1998; Kahlenberg, 2011). Children in schools where poverty is concentrated underperform their counterparts in more economically mixed settings. Indeed, students who are not low-income have lower achievement in high-poverty schools than low-income students attending more affluent schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 2004).

Studies have found, for example, that the working vocabulary of four-year-old children from low-income families is approximately one third the size of that of children from middle-income families (Hart & Risley, 1995). This makes it more difficult for these children to read with comprehension and engage in academic learning when they enter school. By first grade, only half as many students from low-income families are as proficient as students from more affluent families at understanding words in context and engaging in basic mathematics (Denton & West, 2002).

None of this should be taken to suggest that demography is destiny or that children from low-income communities cannot be expected to achieve. However, it does mean that we must pay attention to how poverty negatively influences academic outcomes, and we must ensure that our schools provide the academic and social support that will enable students to thrive. Otherwise, we will be unlikely to reduce the race- and class-based disparities in achievement that characterize American education today.

School Funding Matters

Inequality in public spending on education further exacerbates the effects of high poverty rates and income inequality. In the U.S., funding for schools in affluent communities is typically higher than in poor ones (EEC, 2013; Baker et al., 2013; Darling-Hammond, 2010). The differences are dramatic in many states, with wealthy suburban schools spending twice as much as urban and rural schools that serve higher-need students.

Contrary to the oft-repeated claim that increases in school spending levels have little impact on educational outcomes, funding affects schools' ability to provide both high-quality instruction and the wraparound services (before and after-school care, health supports, and social services) that students need to be ready to learn.

A recent longitudinal study powerfully demonstrated the importance of providing adequate resources to schools to transform academic outcomes.

The study found that districts that substantially increased their spending as a result of court-ordered changes in school finance, low-income children were significantly more likely to graduate from high school, earn livable wages, and avoid poverty in adulthood (Jackson et al., 2014). For low-income students who spent all 12 years of school in districts that increased spending by at least 20%, graduation rates rose by 23 percentage points, and educational attainment levels rose by a full year. Between the ages of 25 and 45, these same children were 20% less likely to fall into poverty during any given year. Their individual wages were 25% higher than they would have been, and their family incomes were 52% higher. The effects were large enough in some cases to eliminate the entire gap in adult outcomes between those raised in low-income and high-income families.

Policy Recommendations

While much of this work happens in individual schools and School Leadership Teams, the research we have reviewed suggests that three areas of policy support will substantially influence the ability of schools to engage in student-centered practices that support deeper learning to include: 1) funding policies, 2) human capital policies, and 3) instruction and assessment policies.

Funding policies that ensure adequate resources are used productively:

1. Adequate and flexible K-12 funding based on pupil needs.
2. Incentives to develop new school designs that can support deeper learning.
3. Resources for wraparound services that support student success.

Human capital policies that ensure highly effective educators and professional learning opportunities are available to a broad range of schools to enact student-centered practices that support deeper learning:

4. Educator standards that focus preparation programs on how to engage students in deeper learning.
5. Supports for educator preparation and induction that enable strong pedagogical skills.
6. Time for collaboration.
7. Meaningful professional development and evaluation.

Instruction and assessment policies that influence what is taught and how student learning is measured:

8. More supports and fewer constraints for instruction so that schools can innovate.
9. New systems of assessment and accountability that support deeper learning.
10. Systemic learning that enables educators, schools, and agencies to learn from one another.

Research and Continuous Improvement

Charles Payne, Ph.D., Michael Simmons, Ph.D., and Charity Anderson, Ph.D., Joseph C. Cornwall Center for Metropolitan Studies, Rutgers University-Newark

The healthiest and most effective school systems are learning organizations. They support the growth of children and everyone who affects their development with ongoing opportunities, formal and informal, to acquire new knowledge and develop new skills. Professional development and formal research can help develop such organizations, but, as typically provided, both too often have poor reputations in urban schools. When done well, professional development and research can be transformative.

Context: Research on Professional Learning

There is broad agreement among scholars that the most effective professional learning experiences are relevant to teachers' context. These experiences consider teachers' needs, interests, and existing knowledge and are also designed to embed practices into the daily lives of teachers. Built on adult learning practices, professional learning for continuous improvement provides opportunities for teachers to observe, receive feedback, analyze student work, or make presentations, rather than passively listening to lectures and being expected to implement new knowledge without support.

Such professional learning opportunities model effective practice, mirroring methods expected to be used by teachers and students. It provides coaching and expert support, develops teacher leadership, and is of sustained duration (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Desimone, 2011; Wei et al., 2009). Importantly, professional development should be regularly evaluated so that quality can be continually improved (Guskey, 2000).

Formal research should be an ever-present element in the professional learning experience, not done intermittently by specially trained people. As research is typically used, we know that the impediments to its use in schools continue to be formidable, especially in districts serving the most disadvantaged children. In general, teachers rarely use research (Cain, 2016a; Dagenais et al., 2012), but the conditions under which they are most likely to use it parallel very precisely what we know about quality professional development.

Teachers are more likely to use research when:

1. It is relevant to their context and job-embedded, offering concrete interventions that respond to actual issues they face in their classrooms (Borg, 2009; Gore & Gitlin, 2004; Dagenais et al., 2012; See et al., 2016) and uses locally-produced research that they feel is specifically relevant to their classroom context (Cousins & Walker, 2000; Cousins et al., 2006).
2. It uses active learning principles, offering them opportunities to critically engage with research evidence - to debate, question, and evaluate research (Cain, 2016b; Williams & Coles, 2003, 2007; See et al., 2016) and consider it against their own experience (See et al., 2016; Corcoran, 2003).
3. They are collaborators in the research process, which can facilitate trust in the legitimacy of research findings (Cousins & Walker, 2000; Cousins et al., 2006; Dagenais et al., 2012).

Context: Research on Professional Learning

- Poll teachers prior to their return to ask what supports might help them readjust. Social workers and others across the system should plan to help teachers support students who have had particularly traumatic experiences.
- Survey staff, including principals and administrators, about their assessment of previous professional learning efforts in the district, including coaching. What has worked and what has not? Why? How should professional learning opportunities be improved? In what areas do they feel their skills and knowledge most need improving?
- Create multiple pathways to teacher leadership. Consider the use of micro-credentials as one tool (Will, 2017). Also, consider expanded use of Board-certified teachers in schools serving disenfranchised communities. They should be positioned as leaders without removing them from the classroom (Winerip, 2011).
- Expand Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and gather data on existing PLCs to see how their impact might be increased, and make monitoring their effectiveness an ongoing project. Invest significantly in learning opportunities for PLC members, including opportunities for PLCs at different schools and grade levels to learn from one another.
- Think broadly and inclusively about who should be involved in which trainings. Professional learning should involve breaking up silos. The more people in the ecosystem understand the work, the better they may be able to support it or align it with their work.
- Establish a Parent University to address parent-identified learning issues as well as helping parents learn how to better support child development.

- Track both the amount of time and the financial resources devoted to professional learning and benchmark against other districts. A target of 5% of all expenditures going for professional learning might be reasonable.

Context: Research on Professional Learning

- Survey staff about their research needs and patterns of research use. This work should be repeated periodically.
- PLCs should have research support available to them, both to help them place their problems of practice into broader research contexts and to help them develop processes for ongoing assessment and improvement of their work.
- Develop an early warning system to support improved high school graduation. This will involve setting up a way to track freshman on-track and evaluate the timeliness and utility of data to support the process.
- Develop a research-practice collaborative that would serve as a means of evaluating and improving the district's work and as a source of ongoing job-embedded professional development.
- Design a research agenda that pays close attention to other predictors of a variety of important life outcomes and tracks academic programs as well as progress toward sending out graduates who are creative thinkers, responsible and engaged citizens, and effective communicators.
- Sponsor an ongoing birth to adulthood study to trace the development of Newark children in order to understand developmental challenges and resources at each stage. This work should pay particular attention to transitions: prekindergarten to kindergarten, 8th to 9th grade, and 12th grade to college/military/workforce.
- Ensure every department develops some staff with research knowledge and skills of particular importance to that area of work.

Leadership for Equity and Excellence in Newark Public Schools
By Douglas Reeves, Ph.D., Founder, Creative Leadership Solutions

The Central Challenge: Systems Leadership

The central leadership challenge in education is not just educational leadership but systems leadership. A person could be a very successful leader in a district without the complexities many urban districts face and fail as a leader for lack of systems thinking. The essence of systems thinking is that every part of the system influences every other part. Every decision on matters from budget to personnel to technology and facilities are never made in a vacuum, and systems leaders must be prepared to simultaneously address every challenge. The practical implication for systems leadership is that, while state test scores are important indicators for schools, they represent only a portion of what constitutes effective leadership.

Making systems leadership a part of the DNA of school district leadership teams requires a significant transformation in traditional professional learning experiences. The deep work of systems thinking requires more than a series of workshops. Rather, it depends upon a system of differentiated leadership support, including new and prospective building leaders, veteran principals, and central office leaders at every level. It includes a combination of LPLC - Leadership Professional Learning Communities – that systematically share best practices and learn from mistakes. This differentiated approach should also include one-to-one and small-group coaching. Even for leaders steeped in the PLC process, systems leadership requires work far beyond the "four questions" of learning, assessment, intervention, and enrichment. Leaders at every level will develop an understanding of how each element of the system influences the system's performance.

Research and Policy

A substantial body of research has emerged about the leadership practices most associated with equity and excellence, particularly in high-poverty schools. A recent synthesis of this research included more than 100 citations from different sources and researchers using different methodologies (Reeves, 2020). The research focused on these essential leadership practices:

- Organization of schools, departments, and the district as a Professional Learning Community.
- Effective collaboration at every level, including collaborative creation of formative assessments and collaborative scoring of student work.
- Cross-disciplinary emphasis on nonfiction writing, especially argumentative writing.
- Frequent and specific feedback followed by multiple opportunities for success.
- Constructive data analysis, including not only "effect" variables, such as test scores and attendance, but also measurable "cause" variables - which are, the specific actions of leaders and teachers that are associated with the desired effects.

Policy Recommendations: Comprehensive Commitment to Systems Leadership

Although state and federal requirements constrain some decision-making by district leaders, there is much that districts can achieve on their initiative to ensure leaders at every level have capacity and competency in systems leadership. The following four key policy recommendations are a pathway for districts that, with sufficient focus, can be implemented immediately.

1. Create a holistic accountability system that includes both quantitative and qualitative indicators and includes not only the results that we seek, such as safety, academic achievement, and attendance, but also observable indicators in leadership and teaching. This will create accountability as a learning system rather than merely a report card that reflects history with little guidance for the future.
2. Align leadership evaluation with the strategic plan and the twin commitments to equity and excellence. We know that effective feedback for students requires a consistent stream of feedback that helps leaders learn and make mid-course corrections throughout the year. The traditional annual leadership evaluation is an anachronism and is not designed for individual and systems learning. An example of such a leadership evaluation system is the Leadership Performance Matrix, based on research in 37 states and available to the district without royalties or other fees for use. Because the Matrix is open source, it can be modified to meet the specific needs of the district and be aligned with the strategic plan.
3. Create district-wide formative assessments. These are very brief, four- to five-item assessments focused on the most essential standards. Because the assessments are short, teachers and students can get the results back and the data can be used to improve teaching and learning the next day. A critical component of these formative assessments is nonfiction writing, evaluated collaboratively by teachers using a district-wide rubric that is so clear and specific that students can use the rubric to assess their own work. Implicit in these recommendations is the deliberate decision to let teachers and students know to focus on the most essential standards and not attempt to frantically cover all of them. This is especially important in light of the months of missing school days that our students have suffered in the spring of 2020.
4. Develop a Systems Leadership Academy with content that is owned and controlled by the district. The Academy should include opportunities for certification of the core competencies of systems leadership.

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Early Childhood Education

Joel A. Zarrow, Ph.D., CEO, Children's Literacy Initiative (CLI)

The Critical Need to Develop High Quality Early Childhood Education Options

Children who are not kindergarten-ready are half as likely to read well by third grade (Early Care and Education Committee, 2006; Applied Survey Research, 2011). Reading proficiency by third grade, as is widely known, is the most important predictor of high school graduation and career success (Hernandez, 2011). The statistics are more troubling for low-income families, where children, on average, start kindergarten 12 to 14 months behind their peers in preliteracy and language development, among the most essential domains of school readiness (Barrow & Pithers, 2016). Demographic shifts are augmenting the challenge, with 28% of 3 to 4 year-old children in Head Start programs speaking a language other than English in the home, 75% of whom speak Spanish (Barrow & Pithers, 2016; National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). Nationally, 22% of children under the age of 5 live in poverty, meaning over the next five years, 4,250,000 children will already be at a significant educational disadvantage when they enter kindergarten (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016).

Fortunately, there is robust research showing that children who participate in quality prekindergarten programs have better health, social-emotional, and cognitive outcomes than those who do not (e.g., Camilli, et al., 2010; Chambers, Cheung, & Slavin, 2006; Chambers, et al., 2013; Coghlan, et al., 2009; Kuhl, 2011; Waldfogel & Washbrook, 2010). Having high-quality prekindergarten means having high-quality prekindergarten teachers, given teachers are the most important in-school factor impacting student outcomes (Palermo et al., 2007). Yet, there is ample evidence that many children do not have access to well-prepared teachers (Lieberman et al., 2017). In many respects, the nation is facing a workforce development challenge for early childhood educators: only 35 state-funded programs require prekindergarten teachers to have a bachelor's degree (Barnett et al., 2017) and most Prekindergarten teacher programs are not covering the knowledge and competencies needed to work effectively with young children (Putman, Moorer, & Walsh, 2016).

Without providing prekindergarten teachers with 1) a developmentally appropriate research-based curriculum that provides the pedagogical and content scaffolding teachers need to foster student growth and 2) the hands-on support they need to implement well, the nation will continue to see inequitable results with lasting and detrimental implications for our children, communities, and country.

Research Points to Two Critical Factors: 1) High-Quality Curriculum and 2) High-Quality Teachers

A well-implemented, developmentally appropriate curriculum is a critical factor in student academic success (Workman & Ullrich, 2017; Atchison, Diffy, & Parker, 2018). However, not just any curriculum contributes to student achievement; it must be high-quality (NCQTL, 2015; Philips et al., 2017; Atchison, Diffy, & Parker, 2018). While there are numerous quality frameworks, The National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning (NCQTL) identifies 13 components that need to be present in an effective curriculum (NCQTL, 2015):

NCQTL Components of an Effective Curriculum	
1. Grounded in child development principles	8. Responsive teaching
2. Evidence-based	9. Supports for individualized instruction
3. Shows effects on child outcomes	10. Culturally and linguistically responsive
4. Comprehensive across learning domains	11. Ongoing assessments
5. Depth for each covered learning domain	12. Professional development opportunities
6. Specific learning goals	13. Family involvement materials
7. Well-designed learning activities	

However, only one of the 16 prekindergarten comprehensive curricula reviewed by NCQTL demonstrated evidence of each of the components, and only two demonstrated evidence of child outcomes (NCQTL, 2015). The field needs better options.

As an increasing number of districts implement bilingual education to meet the needs of diverse students (Wilson, 2011). CLI's comprehensive curriculum in Spanish will address this field-based need. This is significant because of increasing "[e]vidence that the provision of instruction in Spanish can promote reading and math skill development among these very vulnerable children who are struggling to learn English, especially when they attend high-quality programs" (Burchinal et al., 2012).

Having a high-quality curriculum is essential for success, but it must be implemented well to achieve impact (Hamre et al., 2010; Wasik, Bond, & Hindman, 2006). Unfortunately, most teacher professional development is fragmented in focus and of insufficient duration to help teachers implement new strategies (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009). One-time workshops, the most

prevalent model of professional development, have an abysmal track record for changing practice and improving student achievement (Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapley, 2007).

In contrast, coaching, or job-embedded professional development, is one of the most powerful tools for improving practice because it enables continuous understanding, interpretation, and application of new strategies (Parkinson, et al., 2018; Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2011; Taylor, Pearson, Peters, & Rodriguez, 2005). Prekindergarten policy makers, researchers, and advocates are bringing increased attention to the need for high-quality coaching in the prekindergarten setting. The most recent Head Start performance standards require all programs to implement a "research-based, coordinated coaching strategy" (Head Start, 2016). Twenty-five states now require coaching for educators in at least one of their publicly funded early education programs. However, a report from Bellwether Education finds that "the press to meet state requirements for coaching has caused some providers to implement low-quality models. Successful coaching depends on quality coaches who can align their work with classroom curriculum" (O'Keefe, 2017).

Policy Recommendations

1. Invest in Coaching as a Primary Mode of Professional Development for Prekindergarten Teachers. Given prekindergarten teachers are the single most influential in-school factor related to student learning outcomes, it makes sense to invest in better teaching. There are three main advantages to coaching as the primary mode of professional development; 1) there is broad consensus that coaching is the most effective form of teacher professional development; 2) coaching mitigates time constraints and centers face finding time for adult learning without children present; and 3) coaching can be flexibly allocated to target particular areas of need, rather than a one- size-fits-all solution.
2. Include Instructional Aides in all Professional Development. Investing in building the capacity of Instructional Aides provides three advantages: 1) instructional aides are often interacting with children in the same ways as the designated teacher and need similarly strong instructional capacity; 2) given the high rate of teacher turnover, instructional aides provide much needed continuity for students; and 3) supporting the development of instructional aides strengthens the pipeline of future teachers.
3. Invest in Evidence-Based prekindergarten Curriculum. Strengthen curricular review and adoption policies and procedures to require evidence of effectiveness and not simply make conceptual connections to a research base. Beyond aligning to state standards, the curriculum must provide the scaffolding the prekindergarten labor force needs to implement the curriculum effectively. The curriculum must address the diverse language needs of students, with language supports embedded in the curriculum, and, at a minimum, come in English and Spanish versions.

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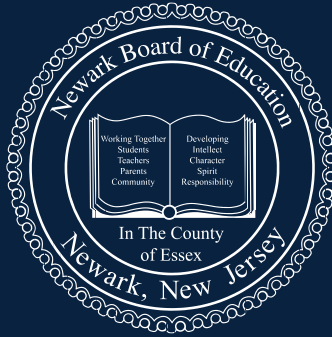
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