



# The Next THREE YEARS

Strategic Plan | 2016-19  
Newark Public Schools





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# Preface

**AUGUST 2016**

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## **TO THE COMMUNITY**

I want to thank everyone who worked countless hours to make this strategic plan a reality.

Many hundreds of people have been invaluable partners — teachers, principals, students, and parents who participated in working groups; community-based organization staff, council members, and community members who attended and helped coordinate our ward-based engagement sessions; the Mayor’s Office; the Board of Education; and our Review Committee. The quality of this plan is a testament to their collaboration and hard work.

This strategic plan reflects the best ideas from across this community. It builds on areas of previous success and investment, such as helping our students solve complex problems and retaining our best educators. And it addresses areas where the district has struggled recently, such as how to better work hand-in-hand with our community members to create programs that support all student needs in all of our schools.

Whether building on progress or identifying new areas for improvement, one consistent theme cuts across all of the strategies presented here: the paramount importance of quality implementation. That means doing what we say we’re going to do. Newark Public Schools (NPS) has experienced dynamic changes recently. Community members made it clear that they value stability and improvement over more change. So do we. With that in mind, we believe that this plan’s focus on implementation is its most innovative feature — the belief that we can achieve our goals by doing the most important things better.

This commitment to improvement across the board will advance us further toward achieving our primary goal: assuring that all Newark children have access to a free, high-quality, public education that prepares them for success in an increasingly demanding world. The plan has four major priorities, each with several strategies and planned actions. Key Milestones and Indicators of Success will help us stay on track and allow the community to hold us accountable for steady progress.

In the short term, the plan will help us create sustainable systems to prepare the district for governing with local control. We have intentionally created a three-year plan, both to guide our administration as we work with the Board of Education to prepare for this transition, and to serve as a blueprint for when new leadership is in place.

In the long term, the plan will position us to prepare our students to learn more deeply, put more great educators in place to support their growth, help our staff work with our community partners to remove barriers outside the classroom, and fundamentally change how we manage and govern all of our schools.

No one initiative or person will get us there, but if we keep working together and stay focused on the many important priorities and strategies the community has helped us establish, we will create better schools for all of our students.



Christopher D. Cerf, Superintendent



# Executive Summary

This three-year strategic plan reflects the collaboration and hard work of many hundreds of people — teachers, principals, students, and parents who participated in working groups; community-based organization staff, council members, and community members who attended and helped coordinate our ward-based engagement sessions; the Mayor’s Office; the Board of Education; and a citywide Review Committee.

This strategic plan embodies the best ideas from across this community. It builds on areas of previous success and investment and addresses areas where the district has struggled recently. One consistent theme cuts across all the priorities, strategies, and action plans: the importance of quality implementation. Doing what we say we’re going to do.

Newark Public Schools (NPS) has experienced dynamic changes recently, and community members have made it clear that they value stability and improvement over more change. So do we. We believe we can achieve our shared goals by doing the most important things better.

## If you are a STUDENT ...

You’ll be exposed to **more challenging classes** that will better prepare you for your choice of colleges and/or careers. Our priorities are **English language arts and mathematics**, where we’ve already upgraded our curriculum and course materials. But the plan now puts additional emphasis on updated **science, social studies, arts, and career and technical education**.

During class time, you can expect **fewer lectures** from your teachers and more **small-group discussions** with your classmates. You’ll have more chances to show what you know, with the teachers asking questions, observing, and providing support. We are making your **learning more relevant**, including lessons focused on the city’s 350 years of history and the state’s Amistad curriculum, which showcases the many contributions of African Americans.



You'll also be doing **a lot more writing** in almost every class. In English and social studies, for example, you'll be asked to write **short and long essays** summarizing and explaining what you have read. In math, you'll need to show your work *and explain how you got the answer*. This is another way for you to show what you know and for your teachers to see where you are ready to move on or where you may need more help.



We'll also be supplementing traditional “book learning” with **more hands-on learning**, where you will be working on projects. In our new **state-of-the art, \$10 million science facility** downtown, students will work side by side with scientists and have access to a large library of online courses. Through our expanded **career-and-technical education (CTE) offerings**, you will be exposed to fast-growing fields in science, technology, engineering, Information Technology, and Health Science. Expanded partnerships with local businesses will provide **internships and summer work experiences**. And in **the arts (fine arts, music, theatre)**, you'll have more opportunities to create, perform, produce, and analyze your work. Our growing use of **instructional technology** (from Chromebooks to Newsela online portals) will help personalize your learning in every subject.

**Students who are behind** can expect more targeted support from teachers, who will be encouraged to use only programs that have been proven to help students catch up. Through the Newark Opportunity Youth Network, transfer high schools and Acceleration Academies will serve **older students** who have dropped out or are at risk of doing so. **Students with special needs** are more likely to find the services they need here in Newark at an NPS school; networks of schools will help ensure that every neighborhood, if not every school, has the right mix of programs in place to serve

your specialized needs. We will use this same principle to ensure **bilingual students** have access to the full array of supports to which they are entitled. In addition, we'll be adding hundreds of new “seats” and strengthening the quality of our **early childhood** programs to help serve our youngest students.

In order to make sure that our students are prepared for success in the classroom, our strategic plan also envisions changes that will affect every part of your school experience. We'll continue to use restorative practices and similar approaches to **reduce out-of-school suspensions** and rethink how we handle discipline. Teachers and administrators will focus on creating **more caring and welcoming school environments**, where students will be treated with respect and where life skills such as teamwork and hard work will be taught along with math, English, and other academic subjects. We will continue to strengthen and expand our **extracurricular options** such as after-school programs, Summer Plus, the Elementary Sports League, and the Bolden Student Center. And if you live in the South Ward, you and your families will be able to take advantage of our new **community schools initiative**, which will provide stronger academics and many additional non-academic supports such as medical care and counseling.



**If you are  
a TEACHER,  
PRINCIPAL, or  
STAFF MEMBER ...**

**Teachers** have more support to help you deliver **high-quality, engaging instruction**. Starting with English language arts and math, we are showing teachers how to shift their teaching practices so that students are doing more of the work – engaging in discussions, listening closely to and building on the comments of classmates, analyzing what they have read, explaining their answers, and writing daily. Teachers’ roles will shift more to launching the topic, actively monitoring the conversations, and intervening to correct any misunderstandings.

The most effective teachers teach this way already. Going forward, we are making major strategic investments in **professional development and curriculum resources** that will help all teachers master these best practices. In the process, you’ll be helping your students reach the higher levels of critical thinking and problem solving required by the state’s new college- and career-ready standards.

**Principals** also will receive more support to become instructional leaders in their buildings, including assistance in providing **more practical and timely feedback** to their teachers. We’re reducing the number of required formal observations, which will free up administrators to spend more time providing informal support and less time writing reports. We’re creating **new structures for relationship building** among adults within and across schools as well as with the central office, with such activities as a cross-district softball league and a picnic for all staff. Educators also will benefit from more **peer learning** through model classrooms and a growing library of **exemplar instructional resources** such as videos. To further strengthen **peer collaboration**, we will continue to refine the Leadership Institutes for Teacher Teams (LIFTT) and ensure teachers are turn-keying that information back to schools.

Our increased emphasis on the **social and emotional aspects of learning** also will help ensure that our schools are more consistently caring and welcoming. Environments like these are conducive to student learning – and adult professionalism. We are strengthening and expanding our **recruitment pipelines**, while developing more effective **induction programs** for teachers and principals.

**Teacher aides and the many non-instructional support staff** also will benefit from clearer job descriptions and more regular feedback and support. Your work creates the positive conditions for learning that are so essential. Going forward, we will more systemically establish expectations, monitor performance, and provide the appropriate support for you as well.



**If you are a  
PARENT  
or FAMILY  
MEMBER ...**

Expect your children to be **more engaged, working harder, and learning more.** They'll be doing more problem solving, writing, and analyzing literature and non-fiction readings. Their learning will be more relevant and real-world through our landmark **Students2Science initiative, arts partnerships, and expanded CTE options.** **Students with special needs** will have access to programs close to home in a neighborhood school.

Thanks to the city's popular and growing **community schools strategy**, families in the South Ward and elsewhere in the city have access to a growing range of services as neighborhood schools become more of a 24/7 hub of community supports, including school-based health services, social workers and other mental health professionals, after-school programs, and job-training classes. **Community Engagement Specialists** are empowering families and other community stakeholders with information and resources, while creating a welcoming school culture.



As a parent and community member, you also will have many **more opportunities for involvement.** Participate in our ongoing Community Talks meetings. Join a parent group at your school. Learn how to advocate for your children and take leadership roles in your schools. Help plan the future of CTE and bilingual education in the city. And you will have access to more **useful information:** including an improved website; increased use of social media; and “snapshots” on the performance of schools, central office, and the district.

**If you are a  
COMMUNITY  
MEMBER ...**

You also will have more **opportunities to participate**, similar to those available for parents and family members. And you'll have access to the same **information**, which will provide clearer and timelier updates on our progress.

As we expand our partnerships, **community-based organizations, higher education institutions, and businesses** will have additional opportunities to partner with NPS, working together with shared expectations to ensure the highest level of support for our students.

Finally, taxpayers and all Newark residents should have growing confidence that our **operations** are more efficient and cost-effective; that we are rethinking how best to provide such key services as **transportation, food service, and procurement;** that our **facilities** are safe, healthy, and serving students and the greater community; and that we are working closely with the **Board of Education** to smooth the transition back to local control.

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This three-year plan focuses on four major priorities and 18 targeted strategies, each with specific action steps, key milestones, and indicators of success. Our goals are ambitious but doable. Community members played a key role in developing this plan over the past several months. We look forward to working with all of you to implement it.

# Setting Goals to Build on Progress and Move Back to Local Control

The purpose of a strategic plan is to set system-wide performance goals for students and then identify specific steps that we can take to help our students achieve these goals, working closely with families and the community.

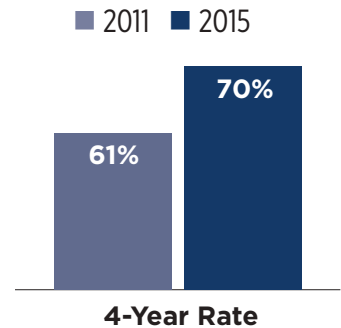
This chapter describes our district's goals. The subsequent chapters, and bulk of this plan, focus on the strategies and action steps we'll take over the next three years to achieve them.

The good news is that while we must continue to improve, our students are making clear progress on multiple fronts.

## More Students Are Graduating

- Between 2011 and 2015, four-year graduation rates improved by nearly 10 percentage points. The district's five-year graduation rate is up as well, at approximately 73% in 2015.

### Graduation Rates Are Rising

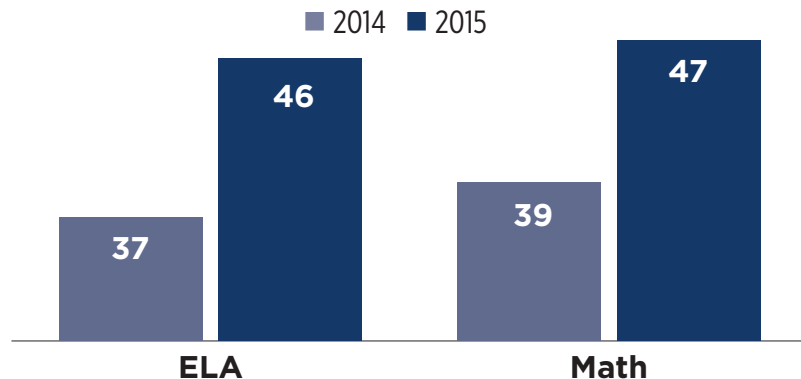


Source: NPS

## English and Math Achievement Is Growing

- In 2014-15, median Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs), which measure the growth a student has made compared to other students who started the year at approximately the same level of proficiency, were up 8 points in math and 9 in English language arts (ELA) from the previous year.

### Student Growth Percentiles Are Rising\*



\*The 50th percentile is the state mean.

Source: NJDOE

- Of the 45 schools serving students in grades K-8, 36 schools improved their SGP score in English in 2014-15, and 31 of 45 schools improved in math.
- Preliminary assessment data from the most recent school year (2015-16) show an increase in overall proficiency rates for Newark Public Schools (NPS) students in math and ELA of 2.6% and 6.1%, respectively, which will translate to additional SGP growth.

## Renew Schools Are Improving

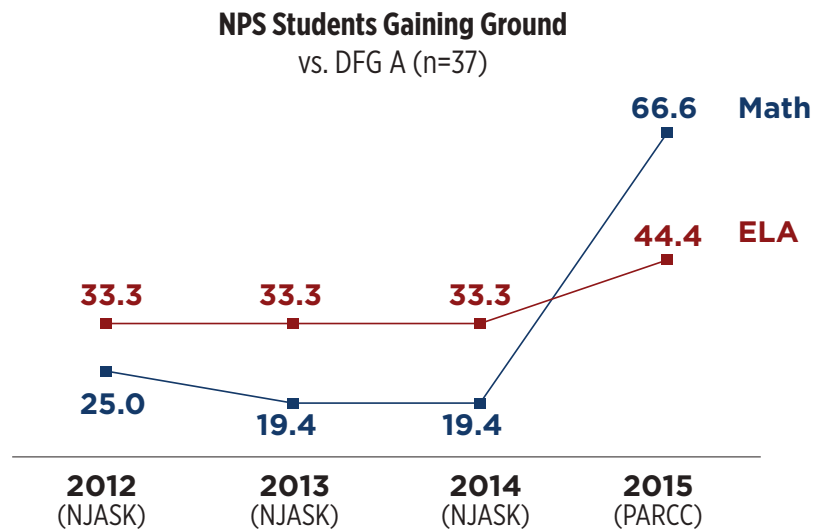
Students at 12 of our 15 Renew Schools, our lowest-performing schools that were the subject of intensive interventions, showed improved growth in ELA in the past year, and students at 10 of 15 schools showed improved growth in math.

- More Renew Schools than ever show student achievement growing at rates above the state average.

## Schools in Newark Are Gaining Ground

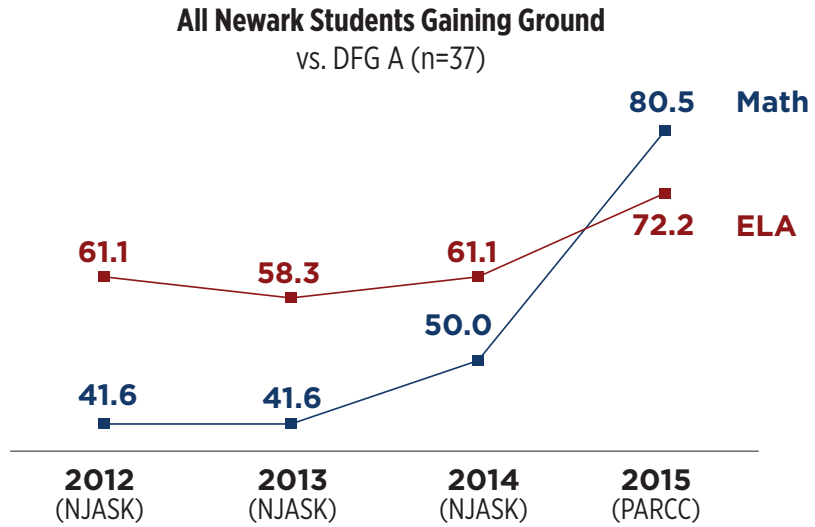
Proficiency rates also improved in 2014-15 compared to similar districts.

- NPS students are improving when compared to peers in districts with similar demographics. On the new Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) exam, NPS students did better than 44% of students with similar demographics (referred to as District Factor Group A , DFG A, by the state) in ELA and 67% in math.



Source: NJDOE

- Newark students (district and public charter) have a higher proficiency rate on the new PARCC exam than 72% of districts with comparable demographics (referred to as DFG A by the state) in ELA and 81% in math.



Source: NJDOE

- 40% of Newark students are enrolled in a high-performing school that “beats the odds,” according to a national study conducted by the Center for Reinventing Public Education. This is the highest rate in the country, meaning a higher proportion of Newark students attend a school (NPS and public charters) that outperforms those serving similar students in other communities.
- Two times as many African American students attend “better than average” schools compared with 2011.

### Other Indicators Are Showing Progress

For the first time in our history, four NPS high schools received a Silver Medal in the *U.S. News/World Report* Best High Schools in America (2015).

Science Park High, American History High School, Technology High School, and University High School were all nationally ranked, and Arts High School and Bard High School Early College received Bronze Medal recognition.

Student suspensions are down 37%, partly due to the district’s implementation of restorative justice practices, which help students resolve conflicts on their own and in small groups.

### Significant Challenges Remain

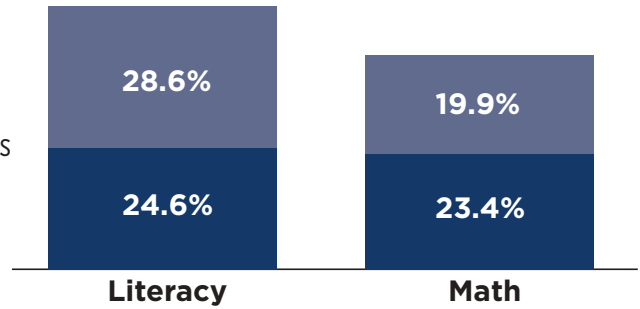
Despite this progress, our challenges remain significant. On the 2015-16 end-of-year tests known as the PARCC assessment, only 29% of NPS students scored a 4 or 5 in literacy which means that just 3 in 10 students are ready for college without remediation. In math, only 20% of students are proficient.

About an additional 24% scored at Level 3 in each subject area, which means they are “approaching expectations.”

### PARCC Results, 2015–16

- % of students meeting or exceeding expectations
- % of students approaching expectations

Source: PARCC



## Looking Ahead: Three-Year Goals

Going forward, we intend to build on our recent progress.

As part of the process to earn back local control, we have been working through the Quality Single Accountability Continuum (QSAC), which is the state's system for monitoring all districts in five areas: Fiscal Management, Governance, Instruction & Program, Operations, and Personnel. NPS already earned back local control in Operations and Fiscal Management, in 2007 and 2014, respectively. This year NPS earned back local control of Personnel. NPS will formally have local control after it earns back control in the two remaining areas.

To earn back control of an area, a district must:

- Demonstrate substantial and sustained progress on that area by earning a score of 80 or higher on a full or interim District Performance Review (DPR); and
- Demonstrate that it has the adequate programs, policies, and personnel in place and in operation to ensure that demonstrated progress is sustained.

Then, the process for returning control begins. This process includes:

- The State Education Commissioner determining that a recommendation to local control is appropriate and proposing this to the New Jersey Board of Education;
- The NJ Board of Education approving a resolution to return the area back to local control;
- The State Department of Education and the district creating a Transition Plan, which spells out the conditions, actions, and policies that the district and board must take; and
- The local board approving the Transition Plan in a resolution. After this step, the district officially has authority over the QSAC area. The state may take control back in cases where the district and board do not follow the Transition Plan.

In particular, when a district earns Governance, this signifies a number of changes regarding authority over policy, two of which are especially important. First, the superintendent will now be appointed by the local board rather than by the state. Second, the local board holds elections about what *type* of board it will become: Type I boards are appointed by a city's mayor, and Type II boards are elected.

In its interim review in 2014, for which scores were received in the summer of 2015 on the three remaining areas under state control, NPS received the following scores:

- Governance: 72
- Instruction and Program: 58
- Personnel: 60



In May 2016, in its latest interim review, NPS received the following scores and updates:

- Governance: 88
- Instruction & Program: 64 and approval of Instruction & Program Equivalency application
- Personnel: 100

Our Instruction & Program Equivalency application established three-year performance goals by revising the QSAC Instruction & Program metrics and goals away from targets based on obsolete NJASK tests and toward growth-based metrics, including growth on PARCC. The approval of this application assures a realistic path toward returning control of Instruction & Program.

We've set goals in each area that we are measured on QSAC and we've outlined these goals below. In order to measure our improvement in each of these areas, we've aligned our goals with specific areas of measurement and identified how much we hope to improve by the end of the upcoming school year.

**In elementary and middle school ELA our goals are to:**

1. Improve student proficiency rates in ELA compared with similar districts in NJ (DFG A)
2. Improve the annual rate that students grow (measured by SGP) in ELA
3. Improve student outcomes on district reading assessments

GOALS	MEASURES (AS DEFINED IN QSAC)	BASELINE (2013-14)	QSAC TARGET (2016-17)
PROFICIENCY	Gr 3-8 Scaled Score Percentile vs. DFG A: NPS	22.2	29.7
	Gr 3-8 Scaled Score Percentile vs. DFG A: Newark	66.6	74.1
GROWTH	Median SGP: All Students	37.0	40.0
	% of Schools with SGP >= 35	73.3%	79.3%
	% of Schools with SGP >= 50	6.7%	12.7%
	% of Schools with SGP >= 65	0.0%	6.0%
	Median SGP: Students with Disabilities	33.0	36.0
READING FLUENCY	DRA-2: Change in % Meeting EOY Standard	43.8%	46.8%
	SRI: Change in % Below Basic	NA	10%

**In elementary and middle school math our goals are to:**

1. Improve student proficiency rates in math compared with similar districts in NJ (DFG A)
2. Improve the annual rate that students grow (measured by SGP) in math

GOALS	MEASURES (AS DEFINED IN QSAC)	BASELINE (2013-14)	QSAC TARGET (2016-17)
PROFICIENCY	Gr 3-8 Scaled Score Percentile vs. DFG A: NPS	19.4	26.9
	Gr 3-8 Scaled Score Percentile vs. DFG A: Newark	61.1	68.6
GROWTH	Median SGP: All Students	39.0	42.0
	% of Schools with SGP >= 35	66.7%	72.7%
	% of Schools with SGP >= 50	17.8%	23.8%
	% of Schools with SGP >= 65	6.7%	10.6%
	Median SGP: Students with Disabilities	32.0	35.0

**For high school students our goals are to:**

1. Improve student graduation rates
2. Improve college readiness
3. Improve credit accumulation

GOALS	MEASURES (AS DEFINED IN QSAC)	BASELINE (2013-14)	QSAC TARGET (2016-17)
GRADUATION RATES	4-Year Graduation Rate	68.6%	71.6%
	5-Year Graduation Rate	69.5%	Prior 4-Yr Rate + 2.5%
	% in 4-Yr Cohort Not Graduating or Continuing	22.3%	19.3%
COLLEGE READINESS	ELA Proficiency Rate (Grades 9-11)	NA	26.6%
	Math Proficiency Rate (Alg I, Geo, Alg II)	NA	13.8%
CREDIT ACCUMULATION	% of Students Earning 30 Credits Annually	NA	84.4%

**And in other specific and important areas we have goals to:**

1. Reduce the rate of chronic absenteeism
2. Improve student proficiency rates in science
3. Increase Pre-K enrollment and improve outcomes for Pre-K students
4. Reduce the amount of time special education students spend in non-inclusive settings
5. Improve English fluency for English language learning students
6. Improve outcomes for our lowest-performing schools

GOALS	MEASURES (AS DEFINED IN QSAC)	BASELINE (2013-14)	QSAC TARGET (2016-17)
ATTENDANCE	Rate of Chronic Absenteeism	30.0%	27.0%
SCIENCE PROFICIENCY	Science: Gr 4 & 8 Scaled Score Percentile vs. DFG A: NPS	19.4	26.9
	Science: Gr 4 & 8 Scaled Score Percentile vs. DFG A: Newark	58.3	65.8
PRE-K ENROLLMENT/ QUALITY	Pre-K Enrollment	6,426	6,600
	Pre-K: Average ECERS-3 Score	NA	4.92
SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS INCLUSION	Special Ed: % in Regular Class < 40% of the Day	52.3%	49.3%
ENGLISH FLUENCY	ELLs: % increasing 0.5 levels or more on ACCESS	55.8%	58.8%
LOWEST-PERFORMING SCHOOLS	% of NPS Schools in Bottom 5% of NJ	46.0%	41.5%

# Strengthen Academics and Student Supports

## Why This Matters

Everything we do must contribute to our ultimate goal: ensuring that students are on track to graduate with the knowledge and skills to thrive in college, careers, and life. No matter which path our graduates choose — college or careers — they need a solid foundation in English language arts (reading, writing, speaking, and listening), math, science, social studies, fine arts, and the other core subjects.

We will continue to implement the state's higher college- and career-ready standards. We will continue to focus on the basics (reading, writing, and math), especially to ensure that students are reading by 3rd grade. We will make instruction more relevant to students' lives — whether it's by using culturally relevant curricula or providing real-world experiences in science and other subjects. We will provide more non-academic supports, starting caring and welcoming schools that help develop students outside the classroom by reinforcing core values. We will provide additional supports, including to students who are far behind in reading, learning to speak English, or have special education needs. And we will improve the quantity and quality of our early education programming.

## Our Theory of Action

Underlying all of our specific strategies is a belief in consistency and alignment across schools, from Pre-K through high school. Principal autonomy won't disappear, but it will be earned based on a proven track record of results. All schools will have a common roadmap for success, along with increased clarity and support from the central office.

Our approach also has students becoming more active learners, starting in the earliest grades — discussing ideas, analyzing what they're reading, explaining their math answers, doing "real science," writing every day, and learning from their mistakes. Teachers' roles will shift from primarily lecturing and being the center of all lessons to developing instructional strategies (e.g., promoting student discussions, regular writing during the lesson) that set up students as thinkers and learners. Teachers will more actively and regularly monitor student progress, correct misconceptions, and provide daily feedback.

*Ensuring more consistency and alignment across schools, while allowing for earned autonomy*

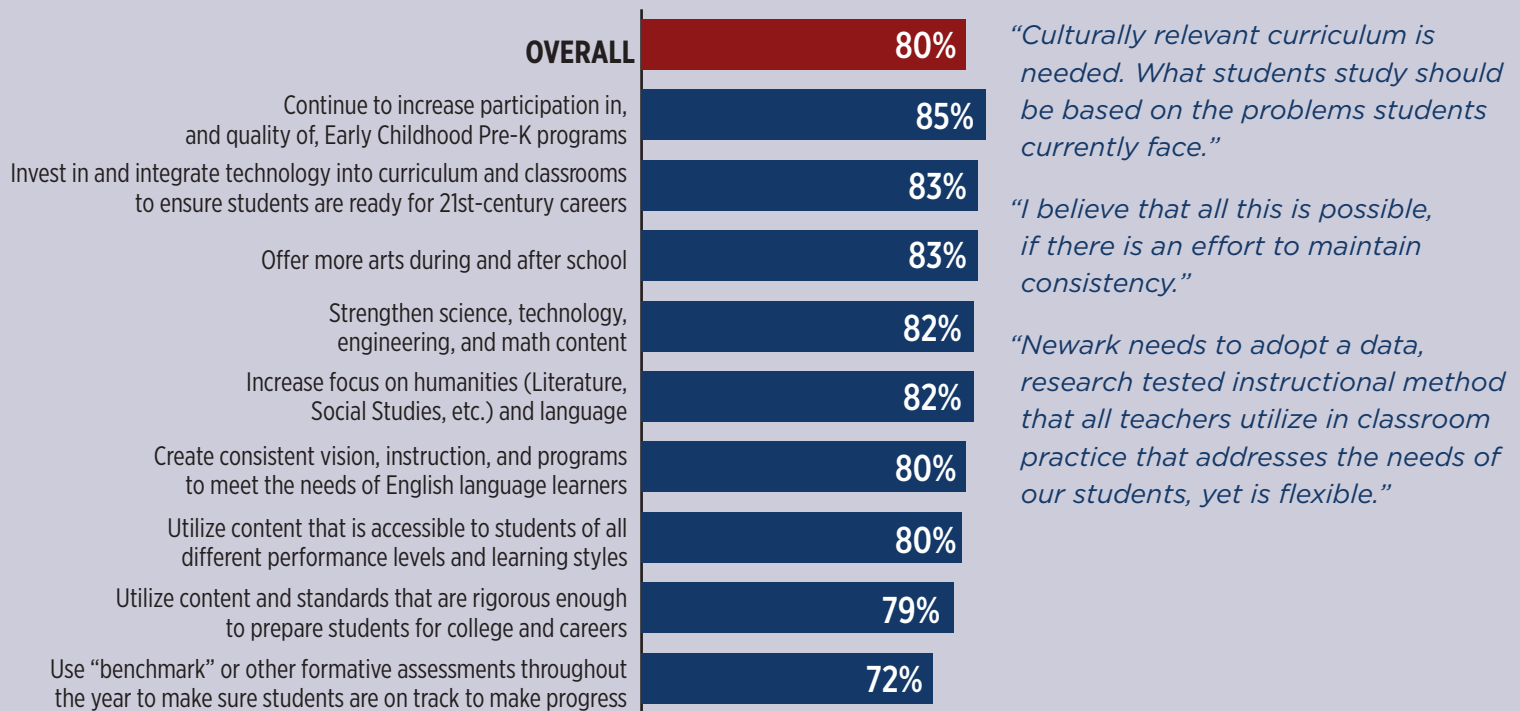
## PROGRESS

- ✓ Higher college- and career-ready standards in English language arts and math, with aligned curriculum and assessments
- ✓ Successful first-year rollout of the new, aligned statewide PARCC assessments
- ✓ Leadership Institutes for Teacher Teams (LIFTTs), through which teacher leaders learn and share with colleagues specific strategies for developing unit and lesson plans, understanding student work, and refining their planning based on student progress
- ✓ Regular principal leadership institutes and vice principal leadership institutes that provide guidance on implementation of core policies and practices in our schools

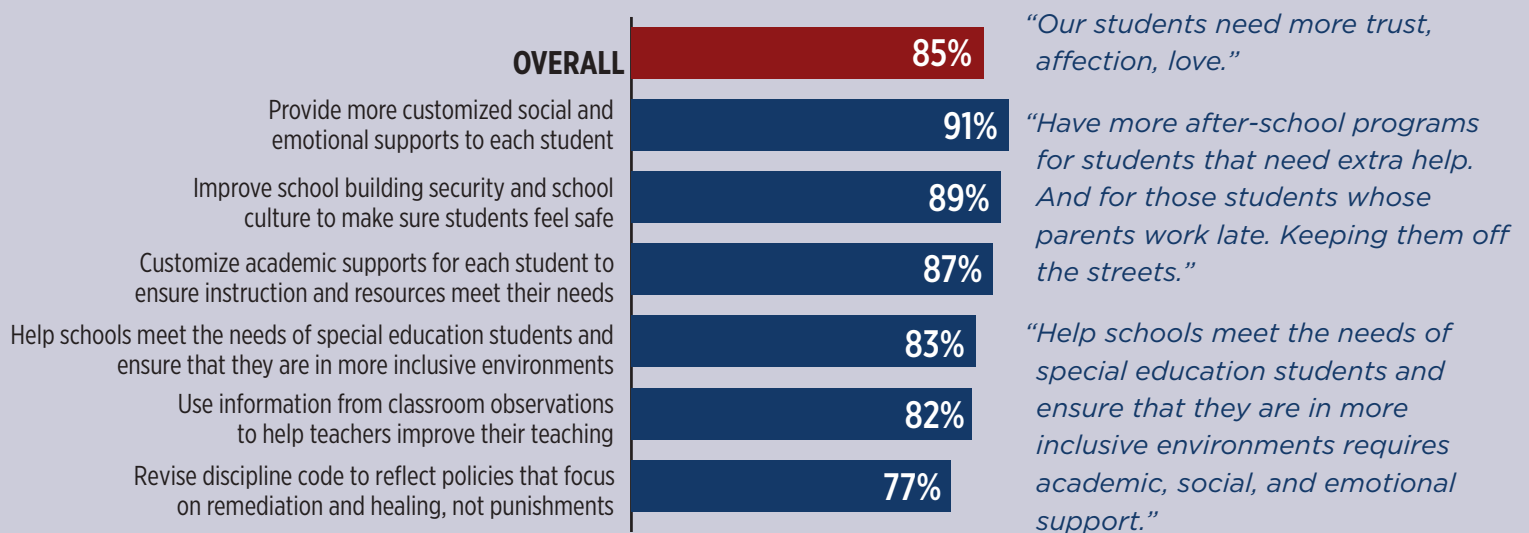
# What We Heard

As part of our series of community meetings and through online surveys this past winter, we asked community members to help us make priorities. In the overall prioritization survey, “curriculum and instruction” was the top-rated choice, with 61% rating it as one of their top three priorities. Related surveys asked Newarkers to weigh in on specific ideas. The following charts show the percentages of those who gave the specific idea one of the top two ratings.

## Academics and Curriculum Priorities



## Student Supports Priorities



Going forward, we are making major strategic investments in professional development and curriculum resources that will help all teachers learn these best practices. In the process, they will help their students reach the higher levels of critical thinking and problem solving required by the state's new college- and career-ready standards.

## STRATEGY 1

### Use a consistent, district-wide approach to instruction that helps develop students' college and career readiness skills

The traditional approach to teaching, where the teacher mainly lectures and students mainly take notes, has not worked for many students. A more effective approach is to turn the model upside down, so that students are truly at the center of the lesson: doing more of the work, learning more in the process, and accepting ownership of their individual path to success. While our best teachers are already teaching this way, over the next three years, Newark Public Schools (NPS) intends to help all educators make the shift toward this new approach by training them on a manageable number of strategies that help improve how we support students and better understand what they are learning. We will identify model teachers and classrooms and share their successful strategies to help others improve. By the end of three years, we expect this ongoing coaching to help all of our educators become effective on a core set of instructional strategies, with increased student learning as proof of their impact.

**A. TRAIN AND COACH TEACHERS IN INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES THAT PUT STUDENTS AT THE CENTER OF THEIR LEARNING.** Currently, in many of our classrooms, the teacher is modeling, explaining, or sometimes just doing too much of the thinking for students. At the heart of our strategy is to flip that approach and increase the opportunities for students to do the analysis, problem solving, and synthesis where possible using technology to enhance this effort. For example, in English language arts (ELA) and other subjects where students consistently read, teachers will facilitate increasingly thoughtful discussions, ask questions, and have students interpret what they have read and explain their insights.

Students will write more and for a variety of purposes. Rather than approaching writing as a culminating activity (such as an essay or project) after all of the thinking has been done, students will share their developing thoughts in writing more frequently. And they will have multiple opportunities to add to and revise their writing.

#### KEY MILESTONES

2016-17

Train all leaders and teachers in the identified instructional strategies in literacy and math. Provide coaching and feedback to teachers on the strategies. Track progress on the quality and impact of their implementation.

Evaluate and, if appropriate, launch a pilot program in one or more schools organized around technology-supported student-centered learning.

*Shifting the instructional model so that students are doing more of the work and teachers are more actively monitoring and offering feedback*



*Sharing models  
of instructional  
excellence to help  
teachers improve  
their craft*

<b>2017-18</b>	Identify model literacy and math classrooms in every school and grade level. Utilize resources from NPS teachers and coaches so every teacher has multiple models for reference. Continue to track progress on the quality and impact of their implementation.
<b>2018-19</b>	Leverage district “master teachers” to train every new teacher who works at NPS, ensuring identified strategies are embedded in every math and literacy classroom. Continue to track progress on the quality and impact of their implementation.

**B. INCREASE CONTENT COACHING SUPPORTS TO TEACHERS AND INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS IN ELA AND MATH.**

To achieve our goals, we must ensure teachers and instructional leaders have frequent opportunities to see models of excellence and get feedback on their work. School-level instructional teams, supported by district coaching supports, will help teachers plan lessons, observe and offer feedback on instruction, and analyze and discuss evidence of learning in student work. To further strengthen professional development, we will develop and widely share guidance and helpful resources (such as videos of effective practice) with teachers, coaches, and school leaders.

KEY MILESTONES	
<b>2016-17</b>	Deploy reorganized central office team of literacy and math coaches to work directly with teachers and instructional coaches and supervisors. Deliver initial training and ongoing coaching to teachers and instructional coaches and supervisors. Assess quality of implementation and provide frequent feedback. Assign coaching supports based on teacher need. Identify model classrooms and others with high potential. Launch an online platform and share resources (videos of practice, planning tools) from model NPS classrooms.
<b>2017-18</b>	Increase quantity of exemplar resources, and modify supports based on year one. Continue to assess quality of implementation and assign coaching supports based on school need.
<b>2018-19</b>	Broaden the team of coaches to include model classroom teachers. Increase quantity and quality of exemplar resources, and continue to improve supports.

**C. PROVIDE MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR HANDS-ON LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES THAT MAKE INSTRUCTION MORE RIGOROUS, RELEVANT, AND ENGAGING FOR STUDENTS.**

**SCIENCE.**

The Next Generation Science Standards provide many more opportunities for students to do real, hands-on science, using experiments and related approaches to teach the core ideas in each discipline as well as cross-cutting concepts. NPS’s new, national model partnership with Students2Science is an example of this priority in action.



## STUDENTS2SCIENCE

In partnership with Students2Science, we have launched a campaign to bring comprehensive, 21st-century science education to all students in the district — a program that will be a model for the nation and an engine of opportunity for the city. This new venture will bring both live and virtually delivered science instruction to all NPS students. The project includes building a state-of-the-art, 10,000-square-foot scientific lab outfitted with \$4 million worth of donated equipment. Plus, a digital learning system will ensure all students experience authentic, hands-on science in the classroom. Lessons will promote critical and complex thinking and expose Newark students to high-demand careers from biotechnology to cybersecurity.

### CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION (CTE).

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CTE courses and sequences provide some of the most authentic learning opportunities, yet decisions on which programs to create are more complicated than ever. As some jobs in the 21st-century economy phase out, others expand exponentially. This rapidly changing landscape requires constant attention to the programs we develop or eliminate. Working with the community (including the Workforce Investment Board, colleagues at Essex County Vocational Schools, and city agencies), we will assess current programs, provide recommendations on each, and make decisions to build or expand those programs that align with the promise of job opportunities and provide real-world certifications or credentials. We will maximize our relationships with local industry partners to create advisory bodies that yield high-quality educational experiences (internships, job shadowing, etc.) for our students. And we will create a “wish list” of new programs based on industry research and community need, focused on key career clusters that have the greatest potential high-wage employment: science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM); Information Technology; Health Science; Business and Finance; Transportation; Distribution and Logistics; Architecture and Construction; and Human Services.

### THE ARTS.

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Art provides opportunities for students to learn in ways that the other core subjects do not. We will work to expand art offerings in our schools and better integrate creativity throughout our curriculum. To help offer “Arts for Every Child in Every School,” we will develop sequential curriculum in all art forms, so that students have more chances to create, perform, produce, and analyze their work. Arts partners and community resources will offer students additional exposure, exploration, and experiences that will expand their art opportunities both inside and outside their schools.

### SOCIAL STUDIES.

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We will provide culturally relevant curricula across academic areas, but particularly in social studies, implementing the requirements of the state’s Amistad legislation and infusing history from overlooked minority groups throughout the curriculum. Students also will have more opportunities to study Newark history through the development and implementation of resources related to the celebration of Newark’s 350th anniversary.

*Offering many more opportunities for students to learn by doing, working on projects that are more relevant and engaging*

## NATIONAL LEADER IN INTEGRATING TECHNOLOGY INTO THE CLASSROOM

We are making significant strides to provide students with opportunities to engage in programming, robotics, and similar fields of the future. NPS already has a reputation as a national leader bringing digital technology into classrooms across the district. These tools support academic achievement by increasing collaboration and providing students with the resources they need to intellectually engage in higher-level thinking and problem solving. Key recent accomplishments include:

- Earned national recognition from The Learning Counsel, a national education research institute;
- Won a \$250,000 Future Ready Schools–New Jersey grant;
- More than doubled the number of daily users of Google Apps for Education, assisted by our recent investment in 11,000 Chromebooks;
- Substantially expanded the use of high-quality digital learning platforms such as SMART amp; and
- Increased our use of programs such as Google Expeditions and Learning Ally to enhance and customize learning.

Going forward, our priorities are to continue supporting teachers through the use of tools such as real-time assessments (including features that allow them to embed audio and written comments) and providing students with tools to collaborate, such as blogs, student websites, and student videos. More and more teachers are learning to use instructional tools such as Newsela, Google Apps, and Read&Write to help students personalize their learning. And we will continue to benefit from the experiences of the seven schools that piloted our Transformation Lighthouse Initiative this year. They are using technology to enhance (1) teaching and learning, (2) school operations, and (3) outreach to stakeholders.

### KEY MILESTONES

<b>2016-17</b>	<p>Finalize and enhance guidance for school leaders to ensure that instruction in science, CTE, the arts, and social studies is rigorous, relevant, and engaging.</p> <p>Deliver 150 virtual lab sessions to students via Students2Science initiative.</p>
<b>2017-18</b>	<p>Train all leaders on our modified approaches to teaching science and social studies. Track quality of implementation and impact on learning.</p> <p>Launch Students2Science laboratory in Newark, and deliver hands-on science instruction to students.</p>
<b>2018-19</b>	<p>Refine science and social studies supports and tools, as needed.</p> <p>Train all leaders on our modified instructional approaches in the arts and CTE. Track progress on their implementation.</p>



## INDICATORS OF PROGRESS

- ✓ Higher ratio of student engagement and thinking in literacy and math classrooms, based on walkthroughs and observations
- ✓ More proactive teacher monitoring and feedback, based on walkthroughs and observations
- ✓ Increased teacher satisfaction with the support they receive from content coaches and school-level instructional teams
- ✓ Increased student opportunities for hands-on learning in science, CTE, the arts, and social studies, based on classroom walkthroughs and observations
- ✓ Students2Science program under way, new state-of-the-art labs in use
- ✓ Regular student use and teacher understanding of innovative instructional technology tools, based on classroom walkthroughs, observations, and surveys

## STRATEGY 2

### Ensure all teachers have access to high-quality curriculum and assessment tools

Over the past three years, NPS strengthened our curricula in many subjects, especially in literacy and mathematics, to better align with new state college- and career-ready standards. The new Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) end-of-year and end-of-course assessments are more accurate measures of student readiness for college and careers. And our adopted curricula are better preparing students for those assessments.

The next steps in this work are to adopt, adapt, or create new or enhanced curricular resources that will help teachers implement core curricula and intervention programs more effectively, while incorporating the instructional strategies described in strategy 1 of this section and continuing to employ the assessment tools already in use.

*Providing practical curriculum tools to help teachers master the instructional shifts, starting with ELA and math*

#### **A. SUPPORT EDUCATORS WITH DETAILED LESSON PLANS THAT DEMONSTRATE HOW TO IMPLEMENT OUR BEST INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES IN ELA.**

Shifting more of the work to students requires extensive planning by teachers. It is much more complicated to design these tasks and present them to students in engaging ways. In ELA, we will assist teachers to make these shifts by providing user-friendly lesson plans that help them implement instructional strategies with a curriculum that includes challenging texts and tasks. While the needs of different students will continue to require teachers to customize and tailor their instruction, these practical resources respond to what teachers told us, and school data indicate, they need — stronger tools to help guide their daily instruction.

KEY MILESTONES	
2016-17	All ELA teachers in grades 3-8 are trained in content and features of more detailed lesson plans. Central office and school-based coaches provide feedback and coaching supports to teachers on quality of implementation and assess degree to which improved lesson plans result in effective execution of key literacy strategies.
2017-18	Transfer learning to additional grades and other subjects. Continue to assess and improve upon district-wide uses of the stronger ELA resources.
2018-19	Evaluate the effectiveness and consistency of district-wide use of ELA resources, and revise policies and training as needed.

**B. PROVIDE MORE INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT AND UPDATED PLANNING TOOLS FOR EDUCATORS IN MATH.** The instructional shifts in mathematics are equal to, if not greater than, those in literacy. In math, educators especially need tools and support to help them re-think the format of their math lessons to emphasize challenging and concrete tasks. These approaches will help students apply what they have learned when they are presented with more diverse sets of complex problems and concepts. These updated planning tools will help teachers more effectively help their students to do more of the thinking, while actively monitoring and supporting student problem solving.

KEY MILESTONES	
2016-17	Train a mathematics instructional team at every school in the instructional strategies and planning resources such that they can implement the updated curricular guidance in math. Ensure the team at every school is able to effect instructional improvement for their teachers.
2017-18	Continue to assess and improve upon the district-wide use of the stronger math resources.
2018-19	Evaluate district-wide use of math resources, and revise policies and training as needed.

**C. IMPLEMENT DATA-DRIVEN PRACTICES USING A RANGE OF FORMATIVE ASSESSMENTS.** The ultimate test of any curriculum or instructional strategy is its impact on student learning. In the next three years, NPS plans to improve how we use data to identify what students have learned and what they still need to learn. We believe the effective use of data leads to sound organizational and classroom decisions. Improvements will include: more rapid turnaround time to get assessment results; more precise data that better identify what was learned and what still needs to be mastered; and more efforts to correlate performance on one assessment with future performance on another.



*Updating teaching resources in science, social studies, and the arts*

We will improve in these areas by using tools and technology that create more efficient systems for collecting this information while engaging students in ways that gives them a sense of ownership over their learning.

KEY MILESTONES	
2016-17	Launch district-wide formative assessment calendar that delivers timely and actionable information to educators about student learning each time an assessment is administered.
	Continue to administer DRA2, SRI, and SPI reading assessments to set student growth goals, identify students for support, and evaluate student reading growth over the course of the year. Continue to administer interim assessments in grades 3-11 in literacy and math to assess progress toward standards.
	Use multiple measures to identify exemplary teachers, and share what they do with others. Use teacher training professional development series to continue to build the skill of school-based teams to independently analyze student learning results and come to sound conclusions. Explore partnerships with districts and other organizations who are leaders in this field.
2017-18	Ensure reports and practices launched in 2016-17 become standard across all schools. Leverage highly effective teacher teams and school leadership teams to serve as models, coaches, and resources to other teams in their building and other schools. Continue to shorten data timelines and make information accessible and actionable earlier.
2018-19	Continue to refine timeliness and quality of learning data. Continue coaching supports to school leaders and teacher teams on analysis and response to data.

**D. UPDATE RESOURCES IN SCIENCE, SOCIAL STUDIES, AND THE ARTS IN ALIGNMENT WITH NEW STANDARDS.** In science, this means building teacher comfort with the Next Generation Science Standards. In social studies, where the reading of non-fiction text is prevalent, it means focusing on effective discussion and writing about texts, as in literacy. In addition, a priority is to supplement social studies resources to help schools implement the state’s Amistad legislation and other new curricular resources. In the arts, we aim to develop resources that better integrate the arts in other core subjects (especially ELA and social studies) as well as build discrete courses/units of study across all grades in different art forms.

KEY MILESTONES	
2016-17	Pilot new science curricular resources and develop new arts resources.

Offering more  
challenging college-prep  
courses in high school

2017-18	<p>Complete the district-wide use of the stronger science resources.</p> <p>Adopt new science materials at <i>selected</i> grade levels.</p> <p>Complete drafting and begin to pilot new arts and social studies curricular resources.</p>
2018-19	<p>Adopt new science materials at <i>all</i> grade levels.</p> <p>Adopt new arts materials at <i>selected</i> grade levels</p>

**E. DEVELOP CLEAR PATHWAYS TO COLLEGE READINESS THROUGH IMPROVED COURSE OFFERINGS AND SEQUENCING IN ELA, MATH, SCIENCE, SOCIAL STUDIES, AND THE ARTS.** In addition to academically rigorous coursework, we also need to ensure we are offering units of study and courses that are interesting and compelling to our students. To expand rigorous college-level content, we are deepening our relationship with the College Board so that students have more access to Advanced Placement (AP) courses and college-readiness assessments such as the PSAT and SAT. To provide more interesting and compelling coursework, we will assist our schools in designing more elective classes that reflect student interests and future aspirations while continuing to build core skills in literacy and mathematics.

KEY MILESTONES	
2016-17	<p>Implement new partnership with the College Board, including administration of PSAT and SAT to all NPS students in identified grades. Identify additional elective classes for schools to offer. Identify ways to expand access to AP courses to more students.</p>
2017-18	<p>Modify College Board partnership to reflect lessons from year one. Use PSAT and SAT data to identify students for enrollment in AP courses. Offer new elective classes based on year one feedback.</p>
2018-19	<p>Continue to learn from and make improvements to offerings associated with our College Board partnership. Evaluate how data are being used to improve student opportunities. Learn from new course offerings and modify appropriately.</p>



**INDICATORS  
OF PROGRESS**

- ✓ Evidence of teacher implementation of more detailed curriculum supports in ELA and math
- ✓ Increased teacher satisfaction with and regular use of the more detailed curriculum supports in ELA and math
- ✓ Increased teacher satisfaction with and regular use of the more detailed curriculum supports in science, social studies, and the arts
- ✓ All NPS students in eligible grades take PSAT and/or SAT exam
- ✓ Increased number of students with access to challenging AP and similar college-ready courses

Student learning data show us that a significant percentage of our students are not currently meeting grade-level standards. These students include general education students whose performance lags behind their peers, special education students who have not received supports they need, and students who speak a language other than English and are working to make that transition. We must do more for these students to close the gaps and make sure all students have the support needed to get and stay on track for college or career success. Priorities include:

**A. PROVIDE RESEARCH-BASED INTERVENTIONS AND SUPPORTS FOR STRUGGLING STUDENTS.**

Some programs are more successful than others in helping students get back on track. Over the past two years, the district has reviewed and approved a small number of intervention programs and has dedicated resources to making sure that students who most need these programs have access to them. We also have trained hundreds of teachers on how to effectively deliver the various programs. Our primary focus in working with these students must be on literacy. When students cannot read on grade level, their learning is hampered in other subject areas — especially now that the new standards are requiring more problem solving, analyzing text, writing, and explaining their reasoning. Our strategies over the next three years will help close these persistent gaps and get more students on grade level as readers and writers.

*Being more strategic in how we are supporting students who are behind in ELA and math*

## PROGRESS

- ✓ We've established a clear and consistent process for identifying and supporting our lowest-performing schools (Renew Schools). Improvements include a longer school day, increased professional development time for leaders and teachers, community organizing, and increased social and emotional supports.
- ✓ 22 of our elementary schools and 4 of our high schools now have an extended day that provides additional time on task for students.

## KEY MILESTONES

2016-17

Ensure all schools are consistently administering research-based reading assessments to understand students' reading levels and monitor growth.

Adopt, train educators in, and implement recommended research-based reading improvement programs (e.g., System 44, Read 180, Wilson Reading), including those that help students with Individual Education Plans and who are English language learners.

Ensure schools are using well-aligned, recommended math resources (e.g., iReady and Math 180) to support struggling students.

Ensure all school-level instructional leaders have received training on how to help their ELA and math teachers maximize the use of longer instructional blocks to effectively tailor instruction and support struggling students.

Provide scheduling guidance to schools to ensure students get the tailored instruction and additional support they need. For example, schools will ensure that students who need extra support in reading will not be pulled out of their regular reading classes for remediation.

2017-18

Track impact of interventions on student reading levels and literacy achievement measures (e.g., reduction of the number and percentage of students assessed as beginning readers in grades 3-8, impact of improved reading level on PARCC performance).

Refine school literacy intervention plans based on data.

Ensure all schools have a math support plan.

2018-19

Continue to refine school literacy intervention plans and math support plans based on data.

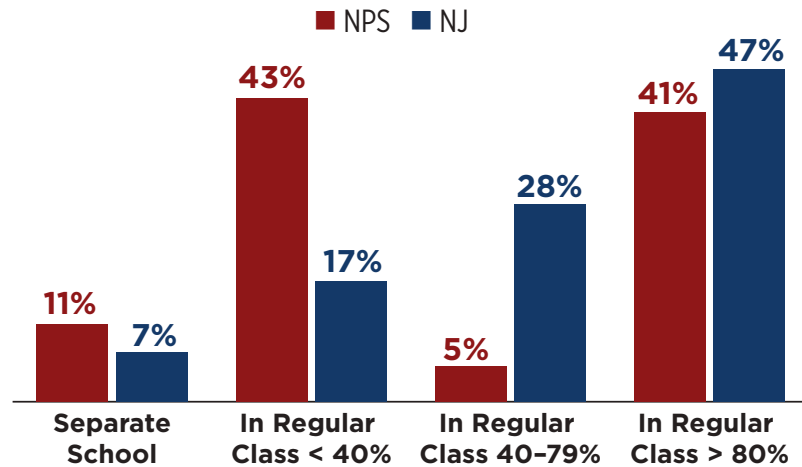
Ensure all school-level instructional leaders have received training on how to help all teachers effectively tailor instruction and support struggling students across all content areas, not just ELA and math.

*Strengthening  
neighborhood schools  
to serve students with  
special needs*

**B. IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF SERVICES AND ACADEMIC OUTCOMES FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS.** NPS has many longstanding challenges in this area. We have a disproportionately high percentage of students diagnosed with special needs: about 17% of our overall enrollment, including 6,100 students enrolled in district schools and over 500 enrolled outside of district schools. Our students are more frequently in restrictive (self-contained) learning environments than their peers across the state and nation. While demonstrating great progress over the past two years, we have continued to struggle to meet timelines for referrals and delivery of services. Our Child Study Teams (CSTs) include professionals with expertise that often does not translate to high-quality services for our students. We can and will make significant inroads on these challenges in the next three years.

## How NPS Compares

Compared to the state average, significantly fewer NPS special education students are in inclusive settings (regular classrooms) *more than 40%* of the school day.



**SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS BY PLACEMENT SETTING**

Source: NJDOE Data

Schools such as McKinley demonstrate that neighborhood schools can provide high-quality support to special education students. McKinley's approach is widely considered a citywide model. Long-time school principal Carolyn Granato, NPS' new Executive Director of special education, will bring her expertise to support special education students across the district. Priorities include:

### CREATE MORE INCLUSIVE OPPORTUNITIES IN NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS.

We will train teachers to recognize and diagnose challenges earlier, Pre-K through grade 2, which will reduce the number of students diagnosed with mild learning disabilities. A huge percentage of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) in the later grades occur because students do not learn to read by 3rd grade. We will retrain CSTs to provide more support to students in those early years. CST members will lead professional development in instructional strategies for general education, special education, and paraprofessionals. Co-teaching models will help resource teachers and general education teachers better understand how to support special education students.

### IMPROVE QUALITY OF IEPs.

We will train CSTs to make more accurate diagnoses and program placement recommendations. Currently, far too many IEPs are not tailored to the specific needs of the student. Through strategies such as deeper involvement of classroom teachers in the design of IEPs and the adoption of new software to capture and share IEPs electronically, we can make great strides in the quality of our IEPs.

### CREATE A MORE COHERENT SYSTEM OF SERVICES FROM PRE-K THROUGH AGE 21.

We will create networks of schools that specialize in specific populations: autism, behavior disabilities, cognitively impaired, and behavior disorders. We intend to create specialty programs within each neighborhood. This approach achieves excellence in the quality of programming, efficiency in the allocation

*Training general education teachers, Child Study Teams, enrollment center staff, and parents to support students with special needs*

of resources to support our students with special needs, and equity in the availability of quality programs close to home and across all wards. These networks of specialty services also will allow us to return students to NPS from out-of-district placements.

**CONTINUE TO ENSURE STUDENT NEEDS ARE REFLECTED IN SCHOOL BUDGETS.**

As discussed more in Priority 4, we will continue to refine the weighted student funding formula to provide more support for severely disabled students. Staffing needs will be defined in quality IEPs and guided by best practices. Our funding formula will then allocate the necessary resources to deliver those services.

**TRAIN PARENTS AND FAMILIES TO PROVIDE MORE SUPPORT AT HOME.**

We will create a model family education program through our worldwide Autism Speaks grant, the only one awarded in the country, and make special education support a priority focus of the Special Education Parent Advisory Council. We will proactively reach out to advocacy groups such as the Statewide Parent Advocacy Network (SPAN) to show them what is possible within NPS and begin to forge a shared vision with organizations that have historically been vocal critics or opponents.

KEY MILESTONES	
<b>2016-17</b>	<p>Assess current offerings and establish quality models and neighborhood networks.</p> <p>Ensure weighted funding formula and school budgets for 2017-18 align with student needs.</p> <p>Retrain CSTs and leverage areas of expertise to improve quality of IEPs and inclusive instruction.</p>
<b>2017-18</b>	<p>Ensure specific K-8 schools in each ward have specialized programs (autism, behavior disabilities, cognitively impaired, and behavior disorders) allowing students to remain in the same building for their elementary career.</p> <p>Engage SPAN and Education Law Center (ELC) about our vision, progress, and advantages.</p>
<b>2018-19</b>	<p>Create learning communities across schools that offer the same special education programs.</p> <p>Offer professional development for charter partners to increase charter capacity to serve students with special needs.</p>



*Developing more consistent supports to serve our fastest-growing student group, English language learners*

**C. INCREASE SUPPORT FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS (ELLs).** The district’s ELL population is one of the fastest-growing groups in our schools. While schools have consistently made extraordinary efforts to support these students with some pockets of success, the level and quality of support has been inconsistent and the resulting student outcomes have not met expectations. Priorities include:

- **Plan with the community** to assess current offerings and work with school leaders and families to better understand program needs (type, location, and number of seats) and best practices.
- **Develop clear pathways** for all new ELLs. For example, incoming “Students with Interrupted Formal Education” will have clear options on the educational goals they can attain at NPS.
- **Strategically promote programmatic grouping** of ELLs in specific schools to ensure students get the support they need. For example, programs such as “Exito” at Camden Elementary offer bilingual students from neighboring schools a full array of bilingual services.
- **Ensure bilingual and English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers are trained** in the more engaging instructional strategies in literacy, math, and other subjects (see Strategy 1 above).
- **Recruit** and develop additional bilingual-certified staff. Bilingual educators are perhaps in the shortest supply in our district. We will continue to pursue strategies (such as new partnerships with teacher training institutions) to address this shortage.

KEY MILESTONES	
2016-17	<p>Work with the community to develop clear district guidance on program pathways for all incoming ELLs. Develop a proposal for how to consolidate some transitional bilingual offerings in selected schools to ensure that students have access to the full array of bilingual supports to which they are entitled.</p> <p>Continue implementing a dual language program in 10 schools for grades K-1.</p> <p>Begin to develop new partnerships with local colleges, universities, and organizations to recruit new bilingual teachers and help existing NPS teachers gain their bilingual certification.</p>
2017-18	<p>Implement district guidance on pathways of programs for all incoming ELLs. Begin consolidating some transitional bilingual offerings in selected schools.</p> <p>Expand the dual language program in 10 schools to grades K-2.</p> <p>Refine the training and coaching of school leaders on more engaging instructional practices.</p> <p>Strengthen postsecondary teacher preparation partnerships.</p> <p>Pilot a revamped Newcomers Program to ensure that schools have specific, ambitious, and feasible goals for these students.</p>

Use data to refine the previous recommendations.

Expand the dual language program in 10 schools to grades K-5.

Implement the revamped Newcomers Program for all relevant students, including “Students with Interrupted Formal Education.”



## INDICATORS OF PROGRESS

### STRUGGLING STUDENTS

- ✓ All schools are consistently administering research-based reading assessments to diagnose and respond to students’ challenges with learning how to read and how to comprehend texts at grade-level complexity. School schedules include the necessary time and staff to deliver reading interventions.
- ✓ Classroom walkthroughs and observations indicate that teachers are using recommended reading and math interventions.
- ✓ Surveys indicate that teachers feel sufficiently prepared to use these interventions.

### SPECIAL EDUCATION

- ✓ Quality models and neighborhood ward networks have been established.
- ✓ Regular observations indicate that CSTs are delivering supports and building programs and systems in alignment with their areas of expertise and that general education teachers have been partners in these changes.
- ✓ Fewer students are identified for out-of-district placements and increasing numbers of out-of-district students are returning to NPS.

### ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

- ✓ Increasing numbers of schools are implementing district guidance on pathways of programs for all incoming ELLs.
- ✓ More ELLs have access to a K-8 continuum of bilingual services within their schools .
- ✓ The dual language program has been expanded in 10 schools to grades K-5.
- ✓ NPS is recruiting more well-prepared bilingual teachers, and the persistent shortage of bilingual teachers has decreased or been eliminated.

*“We want one-one-one relationships with people who care about us. ‘I’m here for you.’ We don’t want social workers. We don’t need more cops. We need someone to listen to us, someone to push us.”*  
 — HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT DURING MAY 2016 FOCUS GROUP

Schools must be places where students are excited to go and where parents and families know their children are safe and cared for. Paramount in making schools these kinds of places are the relationships among the people in them and the cultures that those individuals collectively create. Over the next three years, we aim to ensure that we have strong cultures in every school. We will know we are successful when students, families, and staff report higher levels of satisfaction with the quality of their learning environments. Priorities include:

**PROGRESS**

- ✓ Established Student Support Teams at every school, which are strengths-based, proactive mechanisms for supporting students before they struggle and responding in tailored manner when they do struggle.
- ✓ Identified and began implementation of standards for non-academic instruction in settings such as advisory and convocation.
- ✓ Began work to ensure all students have a “primary person” who knows him/her well. Adopted and adapted curriculum and other tools to help teachers build a positive relationship with their students that communicates caring and support.

**A. BUILD SCHOOL CULTURES OF EXCELLENCE ON A FOUNDATION OF SHARED CORE VALUES.** Every school has a unique identity. Schools with strong cultures shape their identity by naming the values that are important to their community and identifying the specific behaviors and actions that reflect those values. Over the next three years, schools will build cultures where values are reinforced through clear and observable actions. For example, in a school that values preparedness, you may hear staff asking students questions about being prepared when they enter the school building at the start of the day. The school might design ways to measure preparedness and acknowledge students and staff who improve the most in this area. These examples will be unique to each school building, as each has its own set of values, with district leaders working to support each school as they move from identifying values to implementing them.

KEY MILESTONES	
<b>2016-17</b>	Work with schools to identify core values and specific observable behaviors associated with those values.  Adopt and train school leaders on a few district-wide core values to promote a positive school culture. Track progress.
<b>2017-18</b>	Spread understanding of strong school cultures through inter-visitations and sharing resources grounded in effective practices. Identify model schools and ensure their practices are accessible to all other schools.
<b>2018-19</b>	Continue analyzing implementation of previous action steps, and refine as needed.

**B. STRENGTHEN SCHOOL-BASED TEAMS AS THE PRIMARY MEANS TO ENSURE SUCCESS FOR EVERY STUDENT.** The creation of a vibrant and positive learning environment takes a collective effort with teams of people, each committed to a school’s values, collaborating to create school structures, policies, and systems, and people who jointly problem-solve when the results are not what were initially desired. Our work over the next three years is to ensure school-based teams, such as Student Support Teams (SSTs), have the right tools to continuously improve the quality of the supports they provide to students. This will require a clear understanding of student needs, tiered interventions to help students overcome challenges, and the use of data to better understand the impact of the interventions. Fluid two-way communication between grade-level and school-wide teams will ensure that effective strategies are shared and ineffective ones are replaced. Specific year-long plans for each type of team (SST, SST subcommittees, Child Study Teams, and grade-level teams) will help them set goals for their work.

*Supporting students by strengthening adult relationships and integrating social and emotional learning into school practices and instruction*

KEY MILESTONES	
2016-17	Develop district guidance for SST responsibilities, processes, and performance; train school staff accordingly.
	Develop a year-long plan for SST work and use as a foundation for ongoing SST training.
	Conduct observations of SSTs frequently to ensure schools are adhering to the year-long plan.
	Begin to identify best practices and schools demonstrating SST excellence.
2017-18	Identify model SSTs and ensure their practices are accessible to all other schools.
	Update district guidance using examples of best practices from model schools.
2018-19	Continue to use observations to assess quality of SSTs at every school and improve those not yet at standard of excellence.

*Working with the community to ensure that more students are attending school every day*

**C. IMPROVE ATTENDANCE.** All of our schools will aim to improve their student attendance, with our biggest focus on students who historically have been chronically absent from school (>10% of the time, which translates to 18 days or more a year).

In partnership with the City of Newark, we will launch an attendance improvement initiative in year one of this plan. We will use recommendations provided by our community Attendance Committee to create and maintain systems and structures to proactively prevent student absences and notify parents quickly when students are out. In collaboration with community agencies and organizations, we will address root causes that keep students away from school. Among the long list of school-based strategies to be implemented are: connecting students to a “primary” person (such as the teacher in primary grades and an advisor in the secondary grades) who follows up immediately when a student is absent; developing meaningful incentives that motivate students to attend school every day; and leveraging the school’s SST to create specific interventions for groups of students facing similar challenges.

KEY MILESTONES	
<b>2016-17</b>	<p>Share conclusions and recommendations from district-wide Attendance Committee with principals and staff as a part of August professional development. Best practices become district-wide expectations for 2016-17. Sample expectations are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Central Office ensures every school has tight systems to take daily attendance and follow up with families.</li> <li>• Schools frequently review attendance data at multiple levels and use team structures (grade teams, SST) to design solutions.</li> <li>• Schools develop incentive systems to reward excellent attendance and improvements in attendance.</li> </ul> <p>Track data on attendance trends at every school. Identify schools where interventions are improving attendance (i.e., students previously chronically absent now coming more frequently).</p> <p>Continue work of Attendance Committee with focus on planning for focused interventions on subgroups of low-attending students</p>
<b>2017-18</b>	<p>Supplement district guidance and expectations with focus on interventions for subgroups of students who are frequently or chronically absent.</p> <p>Leverage work of Attendance Committee and partner with community organizations and agencies to tackle specific causes of poor attendance.</p> <p>Share best practices from schools achieving improvements, and make those practices accessible to all.</p>
<b>2018-19</b>	<p>Use data to assess impact of all strategies of attendance campaign.</p>

*Rethinking our  
disciplinary policies  
to create welcoming  
communities of respect*

**D. SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE THE TIME STUDENTS SPEND OUT OF CLASS DUE TO DISCIPLINARY ISSUES.**

Over the past three years, NPS has taken great strides to change our disciplinary practices and help our educators better prevent and repair harm when incidents take place. School teams have been trained on how to use restorative practice strategies to build strong, respectful communities. They have learned to respond to issues by facilitating conversations about ownership and forgiveness. Our educators are now taking active steps to repair the harm rather than simply punish and proceed.

The district also launched a citywide committee on discipline practices this past spring. The Discipline Committee, composed of elected officials, professional educators, and advocates from multiple public agencies and private institutions, will help drive important changes in the district's discipline code, policies, and data collection efforts. In three years, we expect all schools to be successfully implementing positive supports, ensuring that disciplinary actions are truly the exception rather than the rule. And when incidents do happen, the responses across schools will be consistent on matters such as removals from classrooms, in-school restorative actions, in-school suspensions, and out-of-school suspensions.

The district also is investing in the creation of a restorative center to make sure that when out-of-school suspension is the only appropriate option, students have tailored supports to help them grow (see Priority 3).

**KEY MILESTONES**

**2016-17**

Continue work of Discipline Committee. Pilot best practices and committee recommendations in 2016-17 as precursor to adoption of new disciplinary policies.

Best practices become district-wide expectations for 2016-17. Sample expectations are:

- Central Office ensures every school has tight systems to document discipline incidents and follow up with families as appropriate.
- Schools follow guidance on responses to incidents and implement restorative practices as appropriate.
- Central Office tracks disciplinary data and ensures students are afforded due process and not denied time in school as a consequence of a disciplinary incident.

Track data on discipline trends at every school. Identify schools where systems and interventions are reducing time spent out of class (especially suspension).

Continue work of Discipline Committee with the goal of Board adoption of new discipline policies by year's end.

Launch new Restorative Center for students on long-term suspensions.



2017-18

Share best practices from schools achieving improvements and make those practices accessible to all.

Design and deliver robust training in alignment with new policies adopted in 2016-17.

2018-19

Use data to assess impact of all new discipline policies and practices.

## EXTENDED TIME AND EXTRACURRICULARS

Increased opportunities for creative academic studies, electives, and extracurricular activities will help inspire student interest and motivation for learning — and give students an additional reason to come to school every day. For example:

- NPS after-school programs serve more than 7,000 students a day, offering a mix of academic support and enrichment opportunities, including STEM, arts, physical activities, and character development for students from kindergarten through 12th grade. Students are provided a portfolio of activities that support school attendance and motivation. Programming also includes activities that engage family members.
- Summer Plus is a blend of academies and enrichment offered by local community organizations and arts providers. These activities, plus field trips and special events, helped increase attendance by 7% from 2014 to 2015.
- The Elementary Sports League provides after-school programming for 1,200 students, culminating in spring tournaments that are extremely well-attended by families. Students are required to show academic goals and gains in order to participate, and they have consistently done so.
- The Bolden Student Center provides a space and place for high school students to learn, socialize, and plan for future endeavors. In 2015-16, the center served an average of 79 students daily from each NPS school as well as Newark private and charter schools.



### INDICATORS OF PROGRESS

- ✓ Increased school leader understanding of and implementation of key core values to promote a positive school culture, based on school walkthroughs and stakeholder surveys
- ✓ Increased school leaders' understanding of and implementation of changes in student support teams, attendance policy, and discipline policy, based on school walkthroughs and artifacts of practice

Students who attend a high-quality Pre-K program, especially for two years, are more likely to stay on track all the way through high school. They perform better academically and socially and are less likely to be held back in later grades. Aligning our Pre-K curriculum and drawing clear connections with the sequence in grades K-3 is a top area of focus. That way, students who graduate from our Pre-K programs are ready for kindergarten and on a trajectory to read on grade level by 3rd grade.

PROGRESS

- ✓ Added 1,000 Pre-K seats and the majority of families eligible for free Pre-K are now enrolled.
- ✓ Became second school district in U.S. to receive a \$7 million Head Start grant to further improve our early childhood facilities and family supports.

**A. INCREASE PRE-K ENROLLMENT AND PARTICIPATION.**

- **Offer and fill additional Pre-K seats in the 2016-17 school year followed by yearly efforts to increase openings and access in underserved areas.** This will provide new Pre-K programming at some schools and additional seats in existing programs at other schools with available space.
- **Implement efficient family-friendly enrollment and registration processes and systems** in all Pre-K settings (i.e., in-district schools, community-based preschool providers), with an effective enrollment outreach campaign to maximize Pre-K enrollment.
- **Transition community-based preschool providers into the district’s enrollment database** to ensure one system is tracking enrollment.
- **Increase attendance and reduce chronic absenteeism** by (1) leveraging district-wide protocols and best practices in all Pre-K settings (i.e., complete the transition of providers into NPS student information system for registration and to monitor attendance); (2) consistently messaging the importance of Pre-K to families through channels such as social media, a texting campaign, and family sessions; and (3) providing targeted supports to families, with a focus on preventative health education, including supports for Pre-K programs to participate in an Asthma-Friendly Schools Initiative.

*Preparing students to start kindergarten and read on grade level by 3rd grade*

KEY MILESTONES

<b>2016-17</b>	Add Pre-K seats. Implement family-friendly enrollment and registration. Transition community-based providers into NPS student information system. Implement strategies to reduce absenteeism.
<b>2017-18</b>	Continue to add additional seats, and learn from year one to modify strategies and systems to boost attendance.
<b>2018-19</b>	Continue to add additional seats, and leverage best practices to boost attendance.

*Increasing enrollment,  
while strengthening  
program quality*

**B. PROVIDE COMPREHENSIVE, HIGH-QUALITY PRE-K PROGRAMMING FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES.**

- **Priorities for curriculum and instruction include:** (1) fully implement the standards-based developmentally appropriate Creative Curriculum for Preschool; (2) upgrade the Second Step Early Learning curriculum in all Pre-K classrooms; and (3) train teacher teams to use assessment data to drive instruction and adopt best practices in Pre-K instruction. We want to balance guided and free play during choice time, targeted and differentiated small-group instruction, and extended learning to the home through parent-child activities.
- **Priorities for supporting children and families include:** (1) continue to ground supports for children exhibiting challenging behaviors in Positive Behavior Strategies (PBS) - The Pyramid Model; (2) ensure that all children with special needs receive the needed classroom supports to thrive; (3) implement family sessions to provide information about supporting children’s health and education, in addition to continuing weekend Family Academy sessions; and (4) improve supports for transitions into and out of Pre-K with a focus on Pre-K to grade 3 alignment and transitions.
- **Priorities for quality programming include:** (1) achieve shared understanding across all sites and classrooms of Pre-K instructional expectations via training and frequent feedback; (2) re-establish baseline levels of quality with all Pre-K classrooms being assessed with the new Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS)-3 and Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT), per NJ Department of Education guidelines; (3) use new baseline data as part of a yearly Pre-K program evaluation and to determine targeted supports classroom by classroom; and (4) implement a Family Satisfaction survey for Pre-K in addition the annual Family Needs survey.
- **Priorities for professional development and training include:** (1) clarify the curriculum, instructional, and family engagement expectations of a high-quality Pre-K program; and (2) support all children in inclusive settings (e.g., ELLs, students with special needs, and students who exhibit challenging behaviors).

KEY MILESTONES	
2016-17	Implement Creative Curriculum and positive behavior strategies. Observe progress to collect data on quality of programs.
2017-18	Use data collected through observations to improve implementation of curricular and behavioral strategies in specific programs. Continue program evaluations.
2018-19	Use data to determine whether curricular or behavioral support strategy changes are needed across programs. Continue to support individual programs with improved implementation.



## INDICATORS OF PROGRESS

- ✓ Additional seats added in each year
- ✓ Increased percentages of families who agree that enrollment and registration processes are more family-friendly, based on surveys
- ✓ All community-based providers using NPS school information system
- ✓ All schools using the full array of instructional resources that are part of Creative Curriculum



# Ensure Great Talent in Every School and Department

## Why This Matters

Extensive research confirms what all of us know from our own experiences. Having effective teachers in every classroom is the most important single step we can take to help Newark students thrive. And effective teachers will be the first to say that what matters most to them is having a supportive and skilled school leader. That means creating a school culture in which excellence is expected, students are respected, staff members are valued, and families are welcomed. It means delivering instruction that is relevant, engaging, and rigorous so that students are excited about learning.

Over the past four years, Newark Public Schools (NPS) has made a clear, deep, and extensive effort to lay a foundation of high-quality talent in support of students. Evaluation, coaching, and retention has been some of our strongest and most consistent work. With a rigorous, high-quality evaluation and support system; a groundbreaking teacher contract signed in 2012; and a complete redesign in the way we hire and support teachers and principals, we have been able to effectively identify high-quality teachers and leaders to ensure we retain our best, while providing supports and coaching to improve educators needing assistance.

As a result, no longer is compensation based only on time served, but also on whether teachers are effective in advancing student learning. Eighty-five percent of our teachers are “effective” or “highly effective”; of those, 95% have remained in our classrooms. At the other end of the spectrum, since 2012, we have filed almost 200 tenure charges to remove low-performing teachers — which is more than any other district in the state and also significantly more than the district had filed in the previous 10 years combined.

The new teacher contract also allowed us to expand the school day in more than half of our schools. Unlike any other district in the state, students across the city are able to spend up to one more hour a day in school. Teachers have also benefitted from receiving more time for professional collaboration as a part of the longer school day.

Finally, the contract allowed us to incentivize enrollment into a high-quality Common Core State Standards-aligned program for our teachers to improve their practice. No longer are teachers paid differently based on what degree they have; rather, teachers earn up to \$20,000 for participation in district-approved programs that improve their practice in real-time.

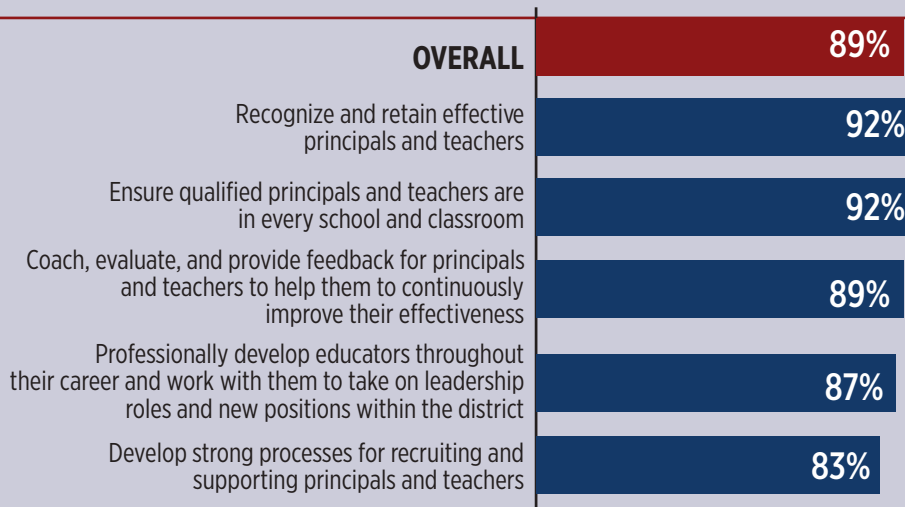
While the district has focused deeply on ensuring high-quality teachers and leaders over the past few years, we also recognize that we have not focused as much on all other staff who work hard in service of the students of Newark. We have made progress in certain areas, including developing new approaches to evaluation for Child Study Team (CST) members, librarians, nurses, student support personnel, and teacher coaches. We implemented new collective bargaining agreements with several local unions with groundbreaking provisions for pay-for-performance. But we also know that there is more we can do to ensure we recruit, coach, and

*Building on our recent accomplishments: a strong system of evaluation, feedback, and coaching; a model teacher contract; and new ways of hiring and supporting educators*

# What We Heard

The community understands the importance of having effective educators in every classroom and school. “Talent” earned the second most support as a top priority in our community survey, just behind “curriculum and instruction.” The following chart shows the percentages of those who gave the specific idea one of the top two ratings.

## Great Educator Priorities



*“If NPS allowed teachers and staff to help in making decisions such as curriculum, things would be better. We know our children. We know our schools.”*

*“Great educators need to know their subject. But to work in an urban area, you also need the right kind of heart.”*

*“A great teacher is the key to having successful, critical thinkers.”*

*“Differentiated professional development [PD] is a must and should be integrated when developing PD classes.”*

### DURING FOCUS GROUPS, HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS TOLD US:

*“We want one-on-one relationships with people who care about us. ‘I’m here for you.’ We don’t want social workers. We don’t need more cops. We need someone to listen to us, someone to push us.”*

*“Students come to school with lots of issues. Teachers should deal with the underlying issues – with the students themselves, not just with the grades.”*

*“We need adults who care. When students feel important and are encouraged, hidden passions emerge.”*



retain our best staff in all areas, from instruction to food service, from security to custodians, from administration to teacher aides.

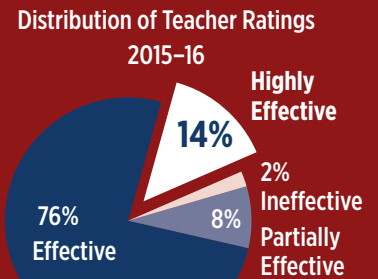
Community members expressed a desire to have NPS educators be people who know and understand our city and the challenges our students face. Students understand the importance of teachers as well. When asked to name their top priority this past spring, about two dozen high school students singled out “teachers who care” as their top choice.

In focus group interviews, teachers and principals recognize that implementing our new evaluation and feedback system has been a heavy investment of their time but that it is also getting results. At the same time, teachers want more useful and timely feedback on their instruction, and school leaders want help providing that support. Teachers want practical assistance, including from colleagues, and more time to work together.

Our foundation of talent allows the system to expect a new level of rigor in the instruction that our students receive on a daily basis (as outlined in the Priority 1 section). Therefore, over the next three years, the district will focus on maintaining what has been working in this area and expanding our work to recruit, retain, and reward high-quality talent in every position, in every school or department, across the district.

## PROGRESS

- ✓ Built a fair and rigorous evaluation system that truly differentiates the quality of our teaching force so that educators can receive feedback and grow
- ✓ 95% of teachers received an annual evaluation in 2015–16
- ✓ Unique use of peer validators ensures fairness
- ✓ Rating distribution reflects an accurate depiction of quality
- ✓ Retained 95% of our “highly effective” teachers and 93% of our “effective” teachers
- ✓ Over the past three years, implemented all key provisions of the groundbreaking teacher contract that puts quality teacher and student success at its core: extended school day and year, compensation that recognizes excellence, more than \$45 million in stipends and bonuses, peer input
- ✓ Implemented rigorous screening and selection process for all principals
- ✓ Adopted new contract covering teachers, security guards, custodial workers, foodservice workers, cooks, nurses, omnibus drivers, and clerks



Source: AIR

*Reviewing our current recruitment pipelines while using innovative approaches that will help us identify the next generation of great educators*

Getting the right educators in our schools is one of the most important supports we provide to students. While we have many excellent educators, we can improve how we recruit the best to come to NPS. Over the next three years, the district will implement a well-defined recruitment strategy that both (1) improves and expands on our most effective recruitment pipelines and (2) creates new and innovative recruitment pipelines and partnerships. These efforts will be bolstered by reviewing and revising our selection criteria to ensure that we are selecting teachers who are the best fit for our schools and our students — that is, to have teachers filled with a passion to set high standards for our students every day and with a keen ability to then help students meet those expectations. To ensure we have a diversity of staff that better reflects the diversity of our students, our recruitment strategies must be aligned with the needs of our students and focused on educators who are committed to Newark. In the end, our goal is to ensure that Newark is seen as the most attractive and compelling place to teach in the area.

**A. IMPROVE AND EXPAND ON OUR MOST EFFECTIVE CURRENT RECRUITMENT PIPELINES.** While the district should introduce new and creative effective recruitment strategies, we also do not want to lose the aspects of recruitment that are working. For instance, we have a strong partnership with Montclair State University, both through the Urban Teacher Residency program and the Woodrow Wilson Teaching Fellows program. Therefore, as a first step, we will review our existing pipelines to understand which institutions are generating high-quality talent and determine how best to expand these efforts, if possible. For example, we find great teaching candidates through student teachers who are placed in our buildings to gain real-life experience in order to graduate with a teaching degree.

KEY MILESTONES	
2016-17	Develop a better understanding of our current student teaching relationships, including capturing data on where our student teachers teach and from which institutions they come.
2017-18	Work with local universities such as Rutgers-Newark and Kean University to expand student teaching programs across the district. Work with school leaders and host teachers to better leverage student teachers as a more robust pipeline for quality teaching.
2018-19	Explore expanding partnerships with residency programs that are producing the best candidates.

**B. CREATE NEW AND INNOVATIVE RECRUITMENT PIPELINES FOR HIGH-QUALITY TALENT.** To supplement the traditional pipelines already outlined, we will also focus on new pathways for recruitment. This will include (1) identifying new partners; (2) “growing our own” next generation of educators from individuals who work in our system already; and (3) creating a larger campaign, in coordination with the city, to get the word out about the benefits of being a teacher in Newark. This work must be especially focused on finding great teachers in subjects that are traditionally hard to fill — bilingual, math, and science courses — as these are increasingly important subjects for our students’ success in college and careers. In addition, we must do more to recruit a diverse teaching workforce that reflects the diversity of our students. We continue to work with the city on a program to provide affordable housing to local teachers. And we will work with the Newark Collaborative to make strengthening recruitment a citywide priority.

KEY MILESTONES	
<b>2016-17</b>	Create new partnerships with local universities to align their programs with our hard-to-staff needs (e.g., creation of a bilingual certificate program for our teachers) and explore new partnerships to expand the diversity of our workforce. In addition, the district will begin to work with the city to create a “Teach in Newark!” campaign that better outlines the benefits of working as an educator in the city.
<b>2017-18</b>	Build a system for developing a pool from within the district (e.g., outreach to effective paraprofessionals and substitute teachers), while exploring partnerships with districts outside of our area for a teacher exchange. We also will roll out the full “Teach in Newark!” campaign, including working with local leaders to create testimonials about working in Newark.
<b>2018-19</b>	Continue to implement programs that build from within, from the teacher exchange program, and from new university partnerships. Evaluate the effectiveness of each strategy and adjust accordingly.

**C. DEVELOP CLEAR SELECTION CRITERIA TO BE ABLE TO SELECT ONLY THOSE EDUCATORS WHO HAVE THE STRONGEST DESIRE TO WORK IN OUR SCHOOLS AND AN ABILITY TO SERVE OUR DIVERSE STUDENT NEEDS.** We need those who have grit, passion, a commitment to the community, and strong instructional expertise.

KEY MILESTONES	
2016-17	Analyze our trends for selection pathways and the effectiveness of retention and quality of each pathway.
2017-18	Modify selection rubrics to ensure they represent values consistent with the district's expectations and the needs of our students. Begin using these rubrics in recruitment and hiring.
2018-19	Assess the effectiveness of new rubrics by gathering feedback, then adjust accordingly.



**INDICATORS OF PROGRESS**

- ✓ Increased percentages of high-quality new teachers coming from existing teacher-prep programs
- ✓ Increased percentages of great student teachers who pursue and accept positions in NPS
- ✓ Increased size of the talent pool for hard-to-staff teaching positions
- ✓ Increased diversity of the NPS teaching workforce

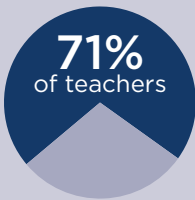


To accelerate growth for our students, we need to keep our best teachers in the district. Recent research by the American Institutes for Research (AIR) quantifies our success in identifying and retaining our most effective teachers (see sidebar). Few systems in the country have independently assessed this information and demonstrated our record of results. Part of our retention strategy involves recognizing and rewarding our most effective educators through raises and compensation. In addition, we recognize and acknowledge our teachers in a variety of ways. Going forward, the district looks to maintain our successful retention rates, with a more refined approach for supporting and retaining our newer teachers and continuing to provide more autonomy and growth opportunities for our best educators. We also will focus on building a stronger culture — both of learning and of fun — in which staff feel deeply connected to their peers.

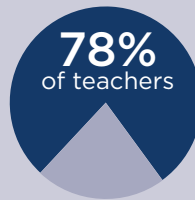
### **KEEPING OUR MOST EFFECTIVE TEACHERS**

A recent independent evaluation by the American Institutes for Research found that, for the two years after we revamped the evaluation and support system, we retained 95% of our “highly effective” teachers and 93% of our “effective” teachers. That compares to 72% of “partially effective” and 63% of “ineffective” teachers.

**Agree that the evaluations provide an accurate measure of teacher performance**



**Indicate that the current evaluation system provides useful feedback and has led teachers to change the way they teach**



*Source: AIR*

*Creating a sense of community and continuing to recognize our valued educators*

**A. PROVIDE EFFECTIVE INDUCTION AND SUPPORT PROGRAMS FOR NEW TEACHERS.** As new teachers need more support early in their career in both teaching content and adjusting to the emotional aspects of this work, we will work to build a stronger induction program for them.

KEY MILESTONES	
2016-17	Provide more specific guidance for principals on school-led supports for new teachers and make improvements to the existing teacher mentor program.
2017-18	Create an expanded district-led program for new teachers and develop a stronger principal mentor program and principal induction program.
2018-19	Assess the effectiveness of our induction and mentor programs, and make any necessary modifications.

**B. BUILD A CULTURE OF LEARNING, PROFESSIONALISM, AND FUN FOR ALL EDUCATORS.** People stay at their job because they feel they can grow and learn; but they also must feel a sense of community and liveliness. This work can be emotionally draining, so it is important to create structures that make this a “fun” place to work.

KEY MILESTONES	
2016-17	Create new structures for relationship building among adults within and across schools as well as with the central office, with such activities as a cross-district softball league and a picnic for all staff.
2017-18	Create structures in schools to ensure peer-learning environments from model classrooms (including identifying a set of model classrooms, capturing them on videotape, and opening them up to others for observation).
2018-19	Collect qualitative and quantitative data to better understand teacher needs and perceptions about their day-to-day work and how they feel about the culture at their school. Use the findings to begin making changes.



**C. ENSURE OUR EDUCATORS FEEL VALUED AND SUPPORTED.** Telling someone who is great how invaluable s/he is goes a long way. Therefore, the district will continue our momentum in this area with several initiatives.

KEY MILESTONES	
2016-17	Explicitly acknowledging effective teachers' and principals' success by empowering their decision-making in key areas. For instance, effective principals can continue to earn autonomy in key budgeting, staffing, programmatic, and curricular decisions.
2017-18	Expand teacher recognition through end-of-year awards and by providing structures and more opportunities to capture teacher input, such as utilizing district-wide committees to ensure teachers are well represented in district planning.
2018-19	Assess compensation levels and structures to ensure they accurately reward great performance.

**D. MAINTAIN THE BAR FOR EXCELLENCE IN OUR CLASSROOMS.** Our students deserve the best. To this end, we must continue to hold high expectations for educators, use our evaluations to accurately measure their effectiveness, and provide appropriate support.

KEY MILESTONES	
2016-17	Share data with school leaders about whether they are keeping their best and, conversely, exiting their lowest-performing teachers. Provide supports to principals on feedback and coaching sessions for educators.
2017-18	Assess the district's progress on retaining our best educators and exiting our lowest-performing, including following state law around tenure charges for low-performing teachers.
2018-19	Evaluate progress, and ensure principals consistently and fairly use retention and exit strategies.



**INDICATORS OF PROGRESS**

- ✓ Increased percentages of new teachers who view mentorship programs favorably
- ✓ A principal mentorship program and induction program implemented, and administrators tracking its effectiveness
- ✓ Increased recognition for the contributions great teachers make to NPS
- ✓ Maintained percentages of highly effective and effective teachers retained from year to year

Improving retention, rewards, and recognition first requires knowing who our most effective educators are. Our more rigorous evaluation and feedback system, initiated in 2012, provides that information. With few exceptions, every NPS teacher now is observed in the classroom at least three times a year. Various safeguards, including peer validators who are independent educators from outside the system, help to ensure the accuracy and fairness of the system. In addition, due to high-quality implementation of this evaluation system, the ratings and feedback our teachers receive allow us to truly differentiate teachers and more appropriately target supports to them.

*Modifying our policies to allow more time for informal observations and feedback*

Our efforts in this area were recently affirmed by AIR in an independent study of our teacher evaluation system in which a majority of teachers (more than 70%) reported that the evaluation system is valid, accurate, fair, and useful. Even more (more than three-quarters of teachers) said the evaluation system provided them with actionable feedback that can inform their instructional practice.

Going forward, we must build on our current approach to these evaluations and supports to ensure that we do not lose the momentum to help teachers improve their instruction. However, we also have heard that the level of work required to do these evaluations has become burdensome to our administrators. Therefore, a key next step will be to modify our policies to allow more time for informal observations and feedback. That way, educators can get the bite-size specific and actionable coaching that helps them improve — and master the new standards-based curriculum and target interventions to struggling students. We will focus especially on using evaluations, observations, and coaching to help teachers implement the proposed changes in instructional practices described in Priority 1.

- A. REDUCE FORMAL OBSERVATION WORKLOAD.** We will free up time for our administrators to spend more time in classrooms and less time writing formal observations.

KEY MILESTONES	
<b>2016-17</b>	Streamline the current formal observation system, including reducing the required number of observations for tenured and “highly effective” teachers and improving the data management process for capturing observations.
<b>2017-18</b>	Continue to ensure teachers receive a number of required formal observations through a rigorous and fair evaluation system.
<b>2018-19</b>	Re-evaluate changes and their impact on the accuracy of evaluations, compliance, and time management.

**B. INCREASE THE AMOUNT OF INFORMAL FEEDBACK ALL EDUCATORS**

**RECEIVE.** Informal feedback based on shorter observations that provide teachers with actionable, real-time feedback is the foundation of strong coaching. Therefore, we must make more space and provide more guidance to schools on how to do this work well.

KEY MILESTONES	
2016-17	Expand the number of informal walkthroughs and quick observations to provide regular feedback through coaching. We will focus especially on helping teachers implement the proposed changes in instructional practices described in Priority 1.
2017-18	Use the year one experience to provide expanded guidance on consistent ways for principals to capture informal feedback and share with educators.
2018-19	Evaluate the effectiveness of the informal feedback being provided, and propose an updated policy for school leaders.

*Providing actionable, real-time feedback and more opportunities for collaboration*

**C. CONTINUE TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF EVIDENCE COLLECTED AND**

**FEEDBACK PROVIDED.** Ongoing evaluation of our processes will help us continue to refine and improve the feedback teachers receive.

KEY MILESTONES	
2016-17	Have administrators work with literacy, math, and other content coaches from central office to provide more specific feedback on content and instructional practices.
2017-18	Focus on norming and validating evaluations to ensure they are of high quality, and work with coach school leaders on how to provide specific, evidence-based feedback.
2018-19	Continue to implement content-based feedback strategy and improved strategy, evaluate effectiveness of training efforts, and adjust as needed.

**D. PROVIDE MORE TIME AND IMPROVED STRUCTURE FOR PROFESSIONAL COLLABORATION.** Teachers frequently told us they want more time to work together with their colleagues.

KEY MILESTONES	
2016-17	Continue to refine the Leadership Institutes for Teacher Teams (LIFTT) experience, and ensure teachers are turn-keying that information back to schools in the most effective ways possible.
2017-18	Evaluate the amount of professional learning time available at NPS schools (across grade and subject levels and models), and identify ways for schools to increase the amount of time and/or improve the effectiveness of how they spend this time.
2018-19	Assess and evaluate the effectiveness of increased professional learning time and collaboration, and adjust accordingly.



**INDICATORS OF PROGRESS**

- ✓ Fewer formal observations required for all teachers
- ✓ Increased informal walkthroughs and quick observations, as reported by teachers
- ✓ Increased percentage of teachers report receiving feedback that is content-based and focused on instructional practices
- ✓ High percentage of teachers surveyed speak favorably about the effectiveness of professional learning opportunities and use of time



We have been more closely evaluating and supporting teachers and principals for several years, with encouraging results. But many more people interact with and work in support of our students. The performance of all of these other employees promotes student success by helping to create the positive conditions for learning that are so essential. Going forward, we will more systemically establish expectations, monitor performance, and provide the appropriate support or exit strategy for these employees as well.

**A. RECRUIT AND EVALUATE ALL TEACHER AIDES.** As our paraprofessionals work with so many students — most in need — the district will set clear expectations for their work and coach them around those expectations.

KEY MILESTONES	
2016-17	Pilot a teacher aide evaluation tool in a sample of schools to learn lessons prior to full district rollout.
2017-18	Roll out our teacher aide evaluation district-wide, and identify development opportunities and new pipelines for recruiting teacher aides.
2018-19	Assess the implementation quality of the evaluation tool, new pipelines, and coaching, and adjust accordingly.

**B. EVALUATE AND SUPPORT NON-INSTRUCTIONAL SCHOOL-BASED EMPLOYEES.** Whether it is a security guard who greets a student at the door in the morning, an accountant in central office who works to ensure a school's orders are appropriately processed and paid, or a food service worker who prepares a student's meals in school, staff across the district are essential to our schools' and students' success. We will work to ensure we have the best staff in all of these roles.

KEY MILESTONES	
2016-17	More consistently implement a new, best-in-class evaluation tool for key non-instructional staff that differentiates quality and identifies where more support is needed.
2017-18	Pilot evaluation tools to ensure that they accurately capture staff performance, and develop additional tools for other non-instructional staff.
2018-19	Roll out a district-wide evaluation tool for all staff, and assess the quality of implementation. Work with staff to assess key areas for professional development and growth.

*Providing more feedback and support to the many non-teacher employees who help create the conditions for learning*



- ✓ Teacher aide evaluation tool rolled out and increasingly used
- ✓ Increased supports for teacher aides
- ✓ New evaluation tool for non-instructional employees rolled out and increasingly used





# Engage the Community

## Why This Matters

*Using a community schools strategy to serve students' academic and non-academic needs with supports such as health clinics and counselors*

Public schools are an integral part of the community. Community members pay our salaries, hold us accountable, and send us our students. At a minimum, parents, families, and community members need to know what we are doing and why — this means better information. But they should also have a say in setting our priorities and budgets — this means more involvement. Parents and guardians, in particular, play a critical role in boosting student achievement; research shows that when they are informed and involved, their children do better in school.

We also know that students perform better when their academic *and* non-academic needs are met, whether it's through a health clinic, a mental health counselor, or a program that supports their parents and caregivers. Our innovative, collaborative South Ward Community Schools Initiative is advancing this more holistic approach.

Across the city, our goal is to provide high-quality school choices for every student in every neighborhood. Thanks to efforts over the past few years, parents have more choices and are engaging in those choices, not just new public charter schools, but new Newark Public Schools (NPS) schools as well:

- Bard High School Early College: 74% of seniors earn a free Associate's degree, alongside their high school diploma.
- Eagle Academy for Young Men: young men are supported to pursue academic excellence, strong character, and responsible leadership.
- Fast Track and Newark Leadership Academy: two transfer schools serve over-age, under-credited youth by providing them the academic, social, and professional skills to finish high school and be college or career ready.
- A new Pre-K through grade 4 school that re-uses an NPS asset (the old First Avenue/Elliott Annex building) to serve the growing school-age population of the Roseville neighborhood and prevent overcrowding before it starts.

Families also have the liberty to apply to a school regardless of their zip code and are overwhelmingly matched to a school they highly prefer. For the 2016–17 school year, 92% of incoming kindergarten students were placed in one of their top three choices.

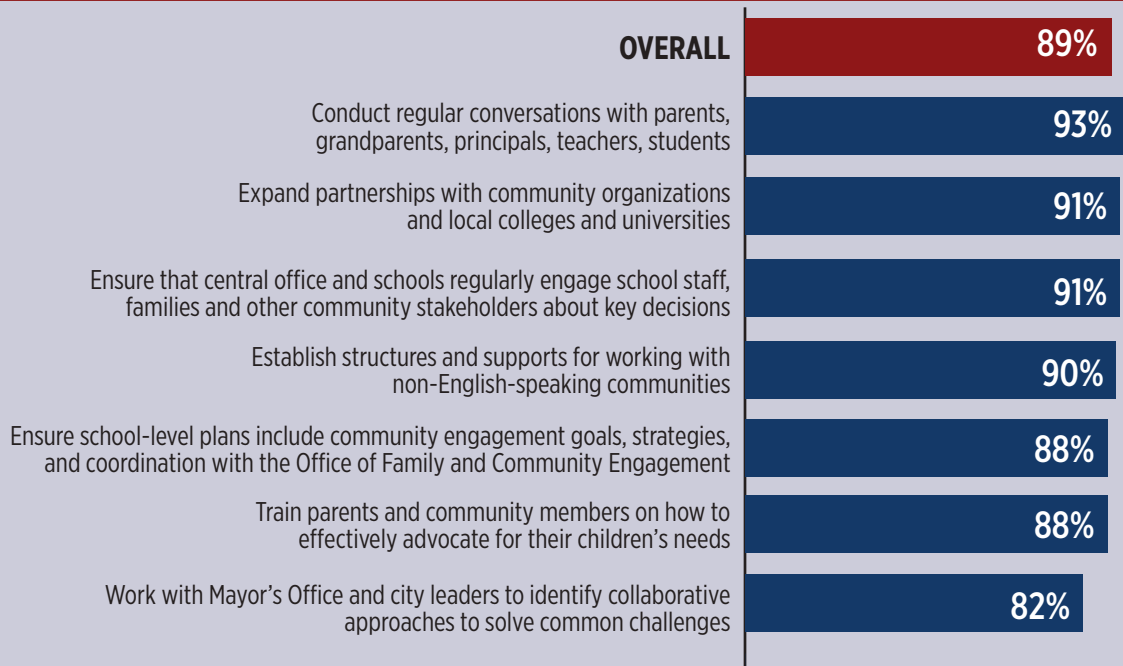
## PROGRESS

- ✓ Two new schools opened with over \$40 million in construction investment each
- ✓ 92% of incoming Kindergarten students placed in one of their top three choices
- ✓ First of its kind enrollment guidebook to support family decision-making
- ✓ Personalized support provided by Family Support Center and Parent Contact Center

# What We Heard

The community told us that in addition to “doing,” we must do a better job of “listening.” We must more regularly engage our families and communities and use this input to help shape our plans — as we have done in developing this strategic plan. We must expand and deepen our partnerships, taking full advantage of the vast number of community organizations and resources with long histories of success in Newark. There is particular enthusiasm among community leaders, educators, and community members for the partnership-driven community schools concept. And, at a more rudimentary level, our communications through the Web, social media, and face-to-face must be clearer and timelier. The following chart shows the percentages of those who gave the specific idea one of the top two ratings.

## Community Engagement Priorities



*“Get more parents involved with students and the community.”*

*“Train parents how to communicate with students and teachers, and partner together to make education successful.”*

*“Community Engagement Specialists do a great job in partnering with families and communities.”*

*“Community engagement is crucial. Parents should be more visible in our schools, whether it's through PTA meetings, visiting classrooms to offer support, or even just walking the buildings (with escorts) to get a feel of the school climate.”*

## STRATEGY 1

### Adopt a community schools strategy

In December 2015, we jointly announced with Mayor Baraka a multi-year, \$10 million South Ward Community Schools Initiative (SWCSI), which will serve Shabazz High School and its four feeder schools: Avon Academy, Belmont Runyon, Louise A. Spencer, and Peshine Academy. The SWCSI is a strategy for organizing resources of the school and community to support student learning. The initiative has been developed with extensive input from parents, teachers, community members, and others. Community schools provide additional academic supports, as well as wrap-around services and programs to help students and their families, such as school-based health services, social workers and other mental health professionals, after-school programs, and job-training classes. Schools are typically open during hours that extend past the traditional school day and year. External partners provide most of these supplemental, non-academic supports, freeing educators to focus more on teaching.

Community schools allow Newark's institutions in every sector to organize assets and resources to fill in service gaps that exist and remove barriers that prevent children from getting a whole and decent education in a safe place. Ultimately, the initiative will help attain our district's vision of ensuring every child can access a free, high-quality public school that will prepare him or her for success in an increasingly demanding world.

#### A. LAUNCH THE SWCSI.

KEY MILESTONES	
2016-17	Work with five school teams, community-based organizations, and families to conduct needs assessments and launch a three-year plan. Establish governance structures, funding strategies, and evaluation framework. Explore feasibility of a district Office of Community Schools.
2017-18	Implement initiative improvements, and strengthen feedback loops between schools/CBOs and central office. Determine sustainability plan.
2018-19	Finalize sustainability plan. Reassess and further develop partnerships.

*The South Ward Community Schools Initiative will serve Shabazz High School and its four feeder schools: Avon Academy, Belmont Runyon, Louise A. Spencer, and Peshine Academy.*



**B. EXPLORE THE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS EFFORTS IN OTHER NEIGHBORHOODS AND WARDS.**

At the same time that we are making a targeted investment in the South Ward, we know that other neighborhoods, communities, and schools are exploring (and in some cases already implementing) community schools strategies. We will offer support to these communities as well.

KEY MILESTONES	
2016-17	Document related efforts (e.g., Quitman Street Community School, Thirteenth Avenue School) across all schools that are adopting a community schools approach. Determine best practices and align district-wide community school strategy. Establish guidelines and processes for community school designation for interested schools.
2017-18	Continue to provide guidelines and support for additional schools to become community schools.
2018-19	Plan for sustainability of existing community school efforts and continued growth.

**INDICATORS OF PROGRESS**

- ✓ High levels of student and family participation in support services provided at SWCSI schools
- ✓ Increasing number of schools across the district pursuing community school grants and adding community school support services
- ✓ Increasing levels of student achievement, as measured by a range of indicators, including state or interim assessments and graduation rates

**STRATEGY 2 Plan with the community**

Building on the engagement that helped shape this strategic plan, we will continue to ensure that school planning decisions are made with the community. In the short term, our immediate priority is to successfully finish major new school projects that have been under way for years: a successful 2016-17 school opening for the new Elliott and Oliver Schools and building a new South Street School, which will provide a long-term solution to overcrowding in the East Ward. We will work with the community to ensure the success of these projects and then work together to identify priority needs going forward in all five wards.

Planning with the community means serving all school-aged children, even ones who may have become disengaged from traditional schooling. As part of this commitment, the district and city are launching the Opportunity Youth Network (OYN), a \$2.5 million effort to provide educational and support services to some of Newark’s most disconnected youth.

In the next three years, we are committed to the following actions:

*Finishing major school projects that have been under way for several years and working with the community to identify future priorities*

- A. COLLABORATIVELY ASSESS SCHOOL PLANNING NEEDS ACROSS WARDS AND NEIGHBORHOODS.** We will work with families, community leaders, and school leaders to better understand ward-specific needs, including neighborhood overcrowding, bilingual programming needs, demand for career and technical education (CTE), and other school programming. Additionally, as part of our operational priorities, we will develop a comprehensive understanding of our building space to support the creation of new programs in response to identified needs.

KEY MILESTONES	
2016-17	Continue and enhance outreach to communities around all planning matters. Collect school programming and facilities information across all schools and buildings.
2017-18	Create <i>ward-specific plans</i> outlining program needs, the rationale for various needs (such as new or additional bilingual, special education, or CTE programs), and building space availability to satisfy them.
2018-19	Update our Long-Range Facilities Plan to reflect current and long-term use of buildings to serve neighborhood students in new and updated programs. <i>(Additional information in Priority 4.)</i>

- B. FOCUS RESOURCES ON DROPOUT PREVENTION AND RE-ENGAGEMENT AT THE HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL.** More than 3,800 of Newark’s dropouts (under age 21) are either unemployed or under-employed. Nearly 1,000 students fall behind their classmates each year and are increasingly unlikely to graduate. There is urgency in Newark to address the challenge of serving youths who have dropped out or are at risk of not completing enough credits to graduate before age 21. Challenges faced by this population are significant and, if not addressed, increase the likelihood of long-term negative outcomes for students (such as involvement with the justice system) and the community (such as civic disengagement). Many factors drive the number of disconnected youth: gaps in skills, knowledge, and services; weak support structures; and early involvement with the juvenile justice system, which disrupts formal schooling.

THE CHALLENGE		
<b>ANNUAL DROPOUTS</b> 400-650+ students	OVER-AGE	
	More than 2 years behind <b>325</b>	1-2 years behind <b>778</b>
AT-RISK 9TH GRADERS		
25% start HS over-age	32% at Level 1 ELA on PARCC assessment	25% at Level 1 math on PARCC assessment

*Note: Data are estimates from Newark Opportunity Youth Network*

The good news is that there is growing recognition of these challenges and consensus around the kinds of supports that are needed to overcome them. Key to these are community partnerships with a common agenda, consistent communication, mutually reinforcing activities that re-connect youth to supportive adults and alternative educational and career pathways, and shared measures of success.

The city and the district have come together to establish the Newark OYN to address this disengagement crisis and establish a network of campuses and programs led by local community-based organizations (CBOs) to provide educational, social, and job training services throughout the city.

Cornerstone elements of this initiative include: reinvigorating two transfer high schools that specialize in serving over-age and under-credited youth, providing embedded in-school interventions in our comprehensive high schools; forming partnerships with CBOs to provide GEDs and job training; and sharing data, advocacy, and policies across all contributing organizations.

KEY MILESTONES	
2016-17	Work with OYN partner organizations to strengthen support and programming at Newark’s transfer high schools (Newark Leadership Academy and Fast Track). Launch an NPS restorative justice center as an alternative to short- and long-term in-home suspension for high school students. Launch an NPS re-engagement center to serve as a single point of entry for diagnosis, support, and placement for dropouts or students in danger of dropping out (e.g., those with multiple same-year school transfers, suspensions, etc.).
2017-18	Identify lessons learned from year one initiatives; implement improvements as needed. Create a plan to provide a similar set of services for disengaged middle school students.
2018-19	Create a longer-term plan to identify increased service offerings and partnerships, along with a prioritization and implementation timeline.

- C. INCREASE THE CAPACITY, AVAILABILITY, AND TYPE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER (ELL) AND BILINGUAL PROGRAM OPTIONS.** We will provide our academics team with program and enrollment support to ensure that students with ELL and bilingual needs are placed in appropriate settings, based on research-based practices.

KEY MILESTONES	
2016-17	Assess current program offerings and work with school leaders and families to better understand program needs (i.e., type of program, location, and number of seats). Support academics team in developing pathways.

*Leading OYN partners to date include NPS, the Mayor’s Office, Rutgers-Newark, Newark Workforce Investment Board, La Casa de Don Pedro, Urban League of Essex County, TEEM Gateway, the NJ Law and Public Safety-Juvenile Justice Commission, and YouthBuild.*

*Eliminating outdated programs and creating high-quality options that address 21st-century needs*

<b>2017-18</b>	Include findings around ELL programming and recommendations in ward-specific plans. Support the implementation of district guidance on appropriate pathways for all ELL students. Support academics team in planning and piloting a newcomers program for immigrants who are new to the United States, who speak limited English, and who may have had an interrupted formal education.
<b>2018-19</b>	Implement a diversified approach, providing neighborhood schools with ELL and bilingual program types based on student demographics and need. <i>(Additional information in Priority 1.)</i>

**D. INCREASE THE CAPACITY AND VARIETY OF CTE AND VOCATIONAL PROGRAMMING ACROSS THE CITY.** Over the past two years, NPS eliminated 17 vocational programs that lacked relevance for the 21st century, were ineffective, were unsustainable, and had little to no student enrollment. Now, NPS offers 12 viable CTE programs that prepare students for success in both college and careers. Our goal is to ensure all CTE programs are high quality and sustainable by (1) strengthening existing programs; (2) creating new ones that are responsive to student interests and community needs; and (3) providing rigorous academic and technical course work/training that empowers, engages, and prepares students to compete in the 21st-century global economy.

KEY MILESTONES	
<b>2016-17</b>	Assess current CTE programs and provide recommendations on factors such as curriculum and instruction, student certification, partnerships, and internships. Create a plan to increase student participation and a “wish list” of new programs based on industry research, student interests, and community needs.
<b>2017-18</b>	Create implementation plan for updating and, if needed, adding CTE programs, while aligning program needs with available space and resources. Recruit staff for planning and developing programs. Recruit lead industry partners to co-design and implement programs.
<b>2018-19</b>	Begin implementation of a subset of new or updated CTE programs. <i>(Additional information in Priority 1.)</i>



- ✓ Creation of ward-specific plans responsive to community feedback
- ✓ Successful update of Long-Range Facilities Plan
- ✓ Increased number of educational placements through the re-engagement center — to CBOs, comprehensive high schools, and transfer schools
- ✓ High daily attendance rates for students who have been referred to the restorative justice center
- ✓ Decreased number of students with repeated short-term and long-term suspensions
- ✓ Completed guidance on the types of ELL programs offered in NPS and their appropriateness for various student populations
- ✓ Increased demand for the district's CTE schools/programs



## STRATEGY 3

### Inform and engage families and community members

Families and community members should be informed regularly about what is happening in their schools, asked frequently about how schools can improve, and given frequent opportunities to get involved. For example, the SWCSI has partnered with Abbott Leadership Institute and Local Initiative Support Corporation to provide parent and resident leadership skills training. The Office of Family and Community Engagement and the Office of Extended Learning Time have partnered with the Black Alliance for Educational Options to provide intensive training sessions designed to build and strengthen skills while increasing parents' overall understanding of educational issues and fostering increased engagement.

*Ensuring that all schools provide strong support to families and community members, while offering multiple opportunities to get involved*

#### COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IS RISING



#### A. SUPPORT PARENTS AND FAMILIES AS PARTNERS AT EACH SCHOOL THROUGH ORGANIZED SCHOOL-BASED GROUPS.

Some schools have strong parent organizations that provide valuable support and guidance. Our goal is to help schools make this the norm.

#### KEY MILESTONES

2016-17

Support a community engagement subcommittee of the Board of Education and conduct an inventory of parent-teacher associations (PTA), parent-teacher organizations (PTO), and other parent groups. Give each school community the authority to organize within or outside of the formal PTA or PTO structure.

#### PROGRESS

- ✓ 1000s of Professional Development hours for CESs
- ✓ 1000s of families attending NPS events
- ✓ 100s of community members engaged in Strategic Planning process
- ✓ 100s of existing partnerships created
- ✓ 1000s more engaged through district social media
- ✓ Revamped website and positive stories section

2017-18

Monitor whether parent groups are meeting and impacting their schools. Use these structures to support and train parents to work with and advocate for their children and take leadership roles in their school community.

2018-19

Establish a school match campaign for every school with local community-based organizations, which will help share information and resources.

- B. SUPPORT AND DEVELOP THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SPECIALIST (CES) FUNCTION AT EACH SCHOOL.** CES staff members empower families and other community stakeholders with information and resources necessary to ensure that Newark students are college and career ready. They are responsible for (1) creating a welcoming school environment for families; (2) working with school administrators to address parent issues and concerns; (3) conducting outreach to engage parents in their children's education; and (4) facilitating meetings, workshops, and discussions with parents and community partners. Because of how valuable these functions are, it is important to ensure they are being fulfilled with fidelity in each school building.

#### KEY MILESTONES

2016-17

Clarify roles and responsibilities of CES staff across schools, ensuring principals in every school understand the important work they do. Provide guidelines to all schools to more effectively serve all parents and school communities.

2017-18

Focus on building the skills of all CES staff and strengthening their relationships with the school community and surrounding neighborhoods.

2018-19

Establish ward cohorts that work directly with Newark Municipal Council members to help provide needed information to parents and families.



*Providing more relevant and timely information, regularly gathering feedback, and creating multiple chances to get involved*

**C. INCREASE THE FREQUENCY OF DIRECT PARENT AND COMMUNITY**

**CONTACT.** In the past several months we were repeatedly encouraged to communicate more regularly, including greater use of newer digital tools. We aim to establish more consistent and broader methods for communication directly with NPS parents and families. We will go beyond phone calls and backpack letters and begin using e-mail, phone apps, and social media to more effectively engage family and community members.

KEY MILESTONES	
<b>2016-17</b>	<p>Improve the accuracy of parent contact information, and use this information to communicate directly with parents more consistently through e-mail. Partner with the City of Newark to use its TV channel for additional coverage of school events and pertinent NPS information.</p> <p>Schedule monthly community meetings with NPS leadership to provide pertinent and timely information to parents and the community.</p>
<b>2017-18</b>	<p>Establish a family survey to capture parental concerns and ideas for engagement and relevant topics that will help drive content and direction for upcoming community meetings and school events.</p>
<b>2018-19</b>	<p>Use parent and community feedback to keep improving the quality and relevance of information shared. Maintain data accuracy and consistent communication.</p>

**D. PROVIDE MORE AND BETTER OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENGAGEMENT.** We made great strides this past year with multiple listening opportunities, including the meetings to inform this plan as well as the series of Community Talks to share information about summer school, enrollment, and other topics.

KEY MILESTONES	
<b>2016-17</b>	<p>Hold Community Talks in each ward in the fall and spring on relevant topics that empower parents with information that helps them make more informed decisions for their children’s academic success. Expand the Title I Citywide Parent Conference to three days and involve parents as presenters.</p>
<b>2017-18</b>	<p>Expand and strengthen support for non-English-speaking parents and families by providing information and speakers relevant to academic achievement, college and career readiness, and financial aid in a culturally relevant manner.</p>
<b>2018-19</b>	<p>Maintain district-wide activities, and support school leaders with school-based engagement activities. Identify additional volunteer opportunities and parent-led programs and initiatives.</p>

**E. IMPROVE THE AVAILABILITY OF INFORMATION ON SCHOOL AND DISTRICT WEBSITES AND CALENDARS, AND IMPROVE SCHOOL AND DISTRICT MARKETING MATERIALS.** Parents and other community members have made it clear that we must upgrade our website, which is now our central communications tool. While the district has made progress in promoting positive news, community members also want stronger materials that market the district’s best schools and programs.

KEY MILESTONES	
2016-17	Refresh the district website to make sure all informational materials and calendars are up to date and user friendly — and positive news is more regularly shared and accessible. Translate more materials and expand vehicles for sharing information with families, including greater use of social media.
2017-18	Collect feedback on and update <i>Principal Points</i> and <i>Teacher Talk</i> publications. Launch a parent-focused monthly informational e-mail and letter and a quarterly community-focused newsletter. Publish school-specific marketing materials during the enrollment period.
2018-19	Finish updating all school-based websites — with identified point people to manage each site. Continue to update and translate all materials regularly.



**INDICATORS OF PROGRESS**

- ✓ Increased number of active parent partner organizations across the district
- ✓ Defined and fulfilled CES responsibilities at every school
- ✓ More families satisfied with how their school engages them directly
- ✓ District use of a family survey to respond to parent concerns
- ✓ Increased e-mail and social media interactions with families and community members
- ✓ Increased number of and attendance at community events
- ✓ Improved satisfaction with the annual Title I Citywide Parent Conference
- ✓ Updated website and timely newsletters for all groups
- ✓ Increased knowledge of communication efforts and satisfaction with availability of information, based on parent survey data

*Working with our partners to develop shared expectations and fill gaps in student supports*

Building on the momentum generated by this planning process, we will continue working closely with community organizations — both to provide services such as after-school care and to offer regular community input about our work. (The partnerships addressed in this section cover all NPS schools, not just the subset that is participating in the community schools efforts in the South Ward and elsewhere, see Strategy 1.) We have just completed an extensive inventory of current partnerships; we are now asking principals to tell us what gaps they most need filled. We are discussing a partnership with the Black Alliance for Educational Options to help raise awareness about engagement opportunities and build advocacy skills to support academic achievement.

**A. DEFINE AND SET PARAMETERS FOR NPS PARTNERS.** NPS has many kinds of partners — from those as small as a community-based organization providing before-school care to a single school all the way to those supporting several schools across multiple functions. Our goal is to create categories or levels so we have a better understanding of where new and existing partners fit. It also will help to have more standard memorandums of understanding (MOUs) for new partners.

KEY MILESTONES	
2016-17	Define the types and levels of partnerships, create an inventory of all partnerships, and set a vision for partnerships. Continue to expand and strengthen existing partnerships with organizations such as Programs for Parents and Rutgers University.
2017-18	Hold an annual partnership fair to match schools with partners, and create MOUs for NPS' most significant partners.
2018-19	Renew partnerships based on effective assessment, data collection, and measurable outcomes that are aligned with NPS curriculum and social-emotional components.

**B. CREATE STRUCTURES TO MAINTAIN AND NURTURE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS.** Building and sustaining partnerships requires resources, notably staff and time.

KEY MILESTONES	
2016-17	Identify leaders at NPS to build on and maintain existing partnerships with CBOs, non-profits, and elected officials — perhaps by creating an Office of Partnerships.
2017-18	Identify partnership leads at each school and create structures for strengthening and maintaining those partnerships.
2018-19	Create a comprehensive database that allows easy management of partner information.



**C. EVALUATE EXISTING ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIPS, AND EXPAND THOSE THAT WORK BEST.** We have put some very innovative partnerships in place over the past several years — both district-wide and at specific schools. We must evaluate the effectiveness of these programs to make sure we expand those that work — and do not invest further in those that do not. Going forward, we must do a better job of setting expectations and monitoring performance.

KEY MILESTONES	
<b>2016-17</b>	Continue to implement existing academic partnerships, such as those with Bard College and Eagle. As part of setting parameters discussed previously, define specific levels of academic partnerships and associated flexibilities and agreements with each level. Define boilerplate MOUs to standardize these agreements when engaging with new partners.
<b>2017-18</b>	Create an evaluation mechanism to determine the effectiveness of programs on a regular basis. Create policies that define actions taken as a result of evaluations — expand those that work, and phase out those that are less effective.
<b>2018-19</b>	Continue to expand our academic partnerships. Improve and standardize academic partnership policies and working agreements.



**INDICATORS OF PROGRESS**

- ✓ Publication of a list of types and levels of partnerships
- ✓ Partnership leads in place in all schools
- ✓ Updated data about specific partnerships at each school site
- ✓ Regular evaluations of all major academic partnerships
- ✓ Parent focus groups and survey on the information and data most important to them and their community



## STRATEGY 5

### Strengthen transparency and accountability

Educators, families, and the community deserve timely, useful information. We aim to promote informed decision-making and deliberation by engaging families and community members to gather information about what information is important to them and refreshing our tools and supports based on this feedback. We will also support and hold schools accountable for providing timely, accurate, and consistent information to their families and community members. In addition, accountability should extend to all adults in the school system — not just teachers and principals who have been our focus over the past three years. Recently, we provided data to inform discussions and decisions about community schools and the work of the Attendance Committee. In the next three years, we will:

- A. GATHER FEEDBACK FROM THE COMMUNITY ON THE SPECIFIC TYPES OF INFORMATION DESIRED AND PREFERRED COMMUNICATION CHANNELS (E.G., WEBSITE, IN PERSON, ETC.), AND IMPROVE EXISTING CHANNELS.** We gathered valuable feedback in assembling this strategic plan, and we intend to act and build on it.

*Continuing to work closely with community members to pinpoint the kinds of information they need and how they want to receive it*

#### KEY MILESTONES

2016-17

Memorialize feedback from parents, the community, and staff on the information that is most important to them, and use existing forums — surveys, community meetings, and structured committees (e.g., Attendance, Disciplinary, Transparency) — to hold ourselves accountable for sharing information on high-interest topics, transparently and widely.

2017-18

Partner with parent organizations and volunteers to serve as parent ambassadors for information sharing.

2018-19

Create a feedback loop with parents, the community, and staff to drive change and improvements to the district “data tools” (outlined on the next page).



- B. RE-LAUNCH “SCHOOL SNAPSHOTS” THAT PROVIDE KEY INFORMATION ABOUT SCHOOL PERFORMANCE.** Parents, families, and the community are eager to have timely, accurate, and accessible information about their children’s school.

KEY MILESTONES	
2016-17	Re-launch a new version of “school snapshots,” which will include important information determined with input from the community.
2017-18	Improve the quality and type of information available on “snapshots,” using the feedback provided.
2018-19	Launch a student survey to incorporate student voices into “school snapshots.”

- C. IMPROVE ACCESSIBILITY AND QUALITY OF INFORMATION AVAILABLE ABOUT THE DISTRICT, INCLUDING NPS OPERATIONS AND THE CENTRAL OFFICE.** We need to provide key performance information pertaining not just to students and schools, but to a wide array of programs and staff. This could include information on talent (e.g., teacher attendance, number of substitute days, principal turnover, staff recruitment), facilities (e.g., condition of buildings, operating funds spent), and the central office (e.g., staff size, budget of various departments).

KEY MILESTONES	
2016-17	Collect feedback on what types of data the community would like to have. Refresh the district-level summary information provided on NPS website. Additionally, build internal capacity and data governance systems to support efficiency and consistency in data releases.
2017-18	Expand the district summary to include more information about the central office and NPS operations. Expand other data available on NPS website.
2018-19	Continue to improve and expand tools and resources available, based on continued community engagement and feedback.



- ✓ Parent focus groups and survey on the information and data most important to them and their community
- ✓ Internal NPS infrastructure for data analysis
- ✓ Updated NPS data site with links to available NPS data, research, and key data resources

# Provide Efficient Operations, Sustainable Budgets, and Skilled Governance

## Why This Matters

*Proactively dealing with the reality that the level of future state funding is uncertain and unlikely to increase — even as the number of Newark students increases*

Newark Public Schools (NPS) is a billion-dollar-a-year enterprise facing massive challenges, fiscal and otherwise. Priorities 1-3 address our most critical priorities. These include rigorous curriculum for all students; high expectations for students and staff; data that are available to teachers in real time, allowing for customized instruction; an effective special education program; a great instructor in every classroom and principal in every school; an enrollment system that provides families with quality choices in every neighborhood; more consistent student supports, such as those being developed through our community schools work; and a commitment to listening and engaging staff, students, parents, and the community. These strategies are easy to put on paper, but they require deep organizational systems and resources to implement.

A large percentage of our staff and service providers are not in classrooms, but they provide the critical support that teachers and students need: from breakfasts to buses, payroll to procurement. With increased competition from public charter schools, smarter school spending is critical to ensure a sustainable system. And as the school system transitions back to local control, it is important to strengthen the processes by which Board of Education members continue to build their expertise and work closely with NPS leadership on sound policies and good governance.

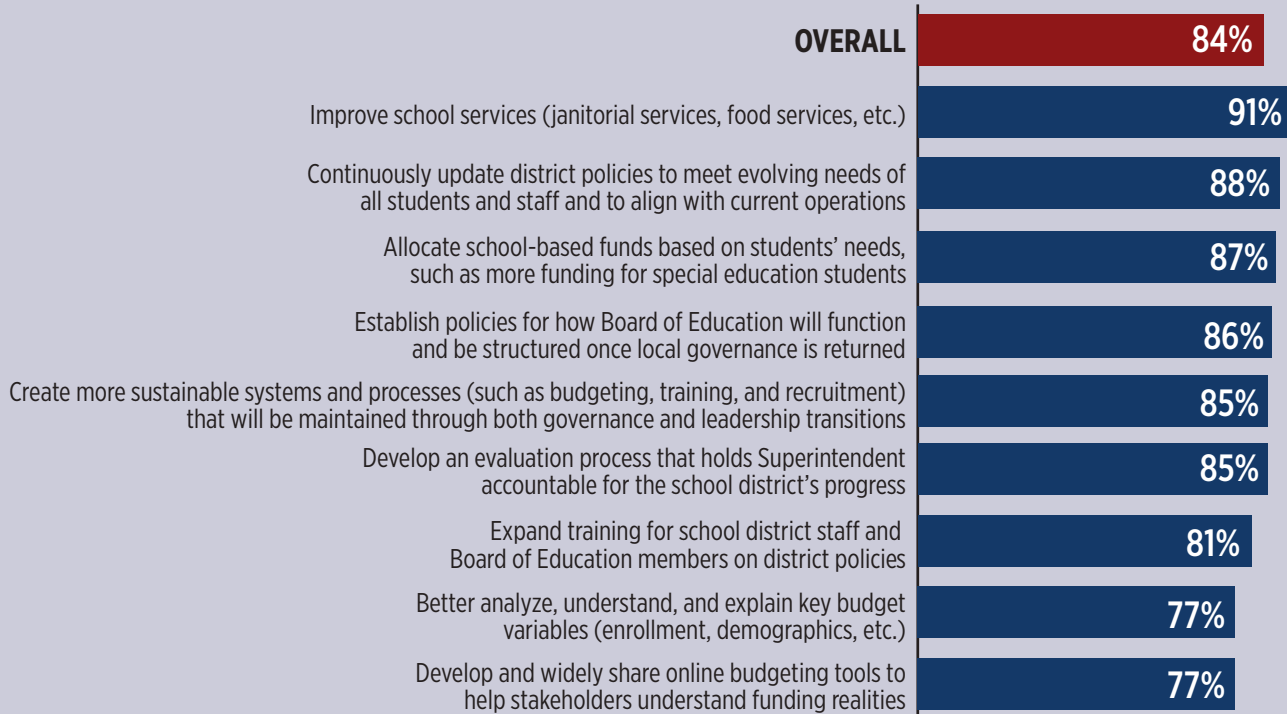
The fiscal realities are challenging. Because of the state's continued financial hardship, the level of future state funding is uncertain and unlikely to increase — even as the number of Newark students increases. In addition, the number of already approved public charter seats will cause charter school aid to materially increase in the next few years; charter payments now account for 27% of our budget (up from 14% in FY2011-12). To the extent this transfer of revenues is offset by a transfer of expenses, the economic impact is neutral. However, when fixed and legacy costs remain with the district, spending per pupil in traditional public schools necessarily goes down. The math is simple: Because these costs must be borne by fewer students, per pupil resources at the school level come under increasing pressure.

The challenges created by these circumstances likely will require us to address budget shortfalls each fiscal year. We have closed an approximately \$75 million deficit in each of the last two budget processes (FY2015-16 and FY2016-17). While we were able to close the budget gap without significant cuts to schools, and will likely be able to accomplish this again with some help from the state this year, we must continue to be aggressive in identifying areas for savings that will position the district better financially in future years.

# What We Heard

The community expects us to spend our money more equitably and continue to invest in essential infrastructure needs in the long-term, from drinkable water to 21st-century facilities and technology. The community understands that it costs more to educate some children than others. For the most part, school leaders welcome additional flexibility to make more decisions about staffing and budgeting at the school level, but they expect central office to provide timely and helpful support. The following chart shows the percentages of those who gave the specific idea one of the top two ratings.

## Operations, Budgets, and Governance Priorities



*“Strong, committed, sustained school leadership as well as qualified, committed teachers are always key to success. But the systems and supports and resources are also critical.”*

*“The biggest priority should be to return local control.”*

Students cannot be successful if they are not in safe and healthy environments for learning. Recent actions to improve water quality in the district have shed light on facilities issues that have gone unresolved for decades. We have taken multiple immediate steps to mitigate the problem, with longer-term solutions to come. Meanwhile, the Board of Education’s resolution to transfer 12 long-unused buildings to the Newark Housing Authority for future disposition relieved us of unnecessary costs and produced new opportunities for generating revenues that can go to support schools and classrooms.

*Ensuring safe water and investing in capital projects in high-need buildings*

**A. IDENTIFY AND IMPLEMENT REMEDIATION STRATEGIES TO ENSURE WATER IS SAFE FOR ALL OUR CHILDREN.** After discovering that 30 school buildings had elevated lead levels in a subset of water sources, we launched a thorough testing process for water across all of our schools. The majority of our schools already have a standard water supply, and we have begun a systematic assessment to bring others into compliance. We developed a water policy and plan that included weekly updates to the public. We have aggressively advocated for additional state and federal help.

KEY MILESTONES	
<b>2016-17</b>	Continue implementing short- and medium-term solutions such as reverse osmosis filtration that removes lead from water. Under our updated water policy, continue to provide bottled water to those schools that need it. Implement a new and standardized testing protocol.
<b>2017-19</b>	As part of our broader facilities assessment, ensure that facilities with water infrastructure challenges develop long-term remediation strategies. This may include infrastructure work; working with experts to change fixtures and filters regularly; and for some schools, continuing to provide them with bottled water for the foreseeable future. Develop and begin implementing a permanent remediation plan that includes replacing pipes and similar interventions.

**B. INVEST IN CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS TO DELIVER CRITICAL UPGRADES FOR HIGH-NEED SCHOOLS.** Unlike most school districts, NPS does not have a capital budget. That means we have to draw down our operating budget to pay for necessities such as masonry, roofs, and boilers.

KEY MILESTONES	
<b>2016-17</b>	Update our facilities needs assessment. Prioritize projects for capital funding.
<b>2017-19</b>	Create and roll out a facilities improvement plan that leverages all available resources and funding. This includes leveraging capital bonds and working with the School Development Authority to fund capital projects where possible.

*Using our space  
efficiently and exploring  
innovative ways to  
raise revenues*

**C. ASSESS CURRENT BUILDING SPACE TO FIND OPPORTUNITIES FOR MORE EFFICIENT USAGE.** We recognize that some of our buildings are overcrowded and others underutilized. We need to gain a better understanding of how we are currently using our building space — whether for schools, programs, or community services. And then, we must determine whether there are more efficient ways to use this space. While co-location is not always popular, it is sometimes necessary given our space needs.

KEY MILESTONES	
<b>2016-17</b>	As part of a larger facilities and district needs assessment, document current usage of building space by schools, programs, community groups, etc. so that we know which buildings are too crowded and which are underused. Assess feasibility of relocating the central office to a less expensive space.
<b>2017-19</b>	Determine the best plan for space usage in each NPS building (number of schools, types of programs served) to ensure every student has access to critical facility needs while maximizing the use of available space.

**D. EXPLORE POTENTIAL REVENUE-GENERATING OPPORTUNITIES FROM OUR FACILITIES ASSETS.** To help counteract the fiscal challenges the district currently faces, we must explore options to increase revenue. Some examples include cell tower leasing and school-appropriate corporate sponsorships.

KEY MILESTONES	
<b>2016-17</b>	Work with community and business partners to explore potential opportunities. Vet opportunities with school stakeholders — these projects must be about education, not advertising. (The district’s previous beverage contract with Pepsi is a promising example; it produced up to \$30,000 in new revenues per school without negatively impacting children’s health.)
<b>2017-19</b>	Create and roll out a plan that helps our budget without impacting the quality of service to our students. Explore generating revenue through bus advertising, which has been approved by the state.



**E. DEVELOP APPROPRIATE POLICIES TO ALLOW USE OF OUR BUILDINGS BY EXTERNAL PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS SUPPORTING NPS FAMILIES.** NPS currently partners with community organizations that use our facility space for events during non-school hours. We want to support these organizations and the work they are doing with our families, while ensuring that additional costs to the NPS facilities budget are minimal.

KEY MILESTONES	
<b>2016-17</b>	Build a database of partner organizations that currently use or would like to use our facilities to support programming. Assess associated costs to NPS.
<b>2017-19</b>	Define a set of policies governing building usage by non-NPS entities to ensure access for partner organizations, while minimizing cost impact to NPS.



**INDICATORS OF PROGRESS**

- ✓ Decreased number of schools using packaged water
- ✓ Increased number of schools on standard water usage
- ✓ Prioritized list of capital projects
- ✓ Increased funding for capital projects through bond and other measures
- ✓ Increased number of capital projects launched and completed
- ✓ Complete, accurate, and uniform school building utilization measures for all school buildings
- ✓ Decreased number of vacant buildings and underutilized classrooms
- ✓ Increased revenue from corporate sponsorships and other creative uses of facilities
- ✓ Increased share of NPS facility costs subsidized by external partners that use our buildings





## STRATEGY 2

## Find operational efficiencies while improving service

Our goal continues to be to maximize the amount of resources going to schools and classrooms, while living within the reality of flat or declining funding. We have made important strides. For example, to improve quality and save money, we brought food services in house this year. We are now serving breakfast *and* lunch ... and we made the commitment to feed *all* students. In transportation, we have strengthened our communications with families and others. We are renegotiating the bus contract to improve routing efficiency and exploring a partnership with NJ Transit to give more students and families' better transportation options at a lower cost to the district.

*Serving breakfast and lunch to **all** students*

### PROGRESS

- ✓ Expanded food service — over 36,000 students served
- ✓ 70% more field trips in 2015-16
- ✓ More than 10,000 NJ Transit bus tickets issued
- ✓ Customer service tracking initiated



- A. REDUCE UNNECESSARY TRANSPORTATION COSTS WHILE IMPROVING THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE.** We currently spend more than \$38 million a year on transportation; our goal is to reduce this by \$4 million through efficiencies, while ensuring the student experience is not negatively affected.

#### KEY MILESTONES

2016-17

Eliminate the shuttle bus service that served students affected by portfolio changes; only 143 of 2,800 eligible students took advantage of this program. By eliminating this service, we save valuable dollars that can be targeted to more pressing needs and can invest in implementing more efficient routing. Redefine special education door-to-door transportation policies to ensure students are served in the least-restrictive setting.

2017-19

Improve partnership with NJ Transit, exploring opportunities such as NPS-dedicated bus routes and monthly bus passes.

- B. GIVE PRINCIPALS MORE INSIGHT INTO SCHOOL OPERATIONS WHILE CONTINUING TO EXPLORE STAFFING EFFICIENCIES.** We will try to find ways to give school leaders more input in non-instructional staffing, particularly within security, a \$15 million annual cost. We have already begun this work by incorporating school leaders in the interview process with custodial and other staff. However, we must do this in a manner that continues to drive down costs.

KEY MILESTONES	
2016-17	Reduce unnecessary overtime through split shifts. Collect feedback from principals on operational staff hiring and retention.
2017-19	Incorporating principal feedback, conduct an assessment of all operational staff to determine the right mix of per diem vs. full-time, regular shift vs. overtime, and similar choices (e.g., we are negotiating contracts to bring our policies into line with labor laws, so that overtime kicks in at 40 hours, not 38.5). Begin defining a strategy to allow school leaders more autonomy in hiring non-teaching staff, such as custodians and security.

*Reducing unnecessary overtime, with more input from school leaders on non-instructional staffing*

- C. BUILD ON THIS YEAR'S MEAL SERVICE EXPANSION TO CONTINUE TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' FOOD SERVICE.** Serving breakfast and lunch to students ensures they are nutritionally-ready to learn. However, we can only continue this commitment if we are able to maintain (or increase) our submissions of lunch forms, which generate federal reimbursements.

KEY MILESTONES	
2016-17	Increase revenue by submitting free- and reduced-price lunch applications at greater rates. Gather feedback on current food service marketing efforts in order to determine how to increase breakfast participation. Renew support of our free "breakfast in the classroom" program at all grade levels (including high school).
2017-19	Continue to work with food vendors to improve overall quality. Pilot an organic foods initiative. Food service and nutrition are areas where we will drive toward more involvement from student leaders.

- D. UPGRADE OUR SCHOOLS' INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURE TO 21ST-CENTURY STANDARDS.** NPS has wired all classrooms for accessing the Internet. Our priority now is to develop and implement a system-wide plan that accurately forecasts and serves the district's educational and operational needs. These include increased bandwidth, improved network security for mobile devices (especially as students and staff increasingly use their own devices), and standards for managing the growing number of data systems in use. To leverage our IT investments, we need to ensure better collaboration and more coherence across schools and within central office.

## KEY MILESTONES

2016-17

Expand NPS broadband capacity from 1GB to 5GB in our two data centers. Work closely with curriculum and instructional leaders to develop an education technology plan that responds to the needs of the district. Assess the information technology (IT) needs of NPS offices. Based on this input, develop a system-wide plan, which will drive our IT spending for education *and* district operations.

2017-19

Begin implementing the strategic IT plan. Monitor implementation and continue adjusting the plan as needed, based on the needs of educators and administrators.



## PROGRESS

- ✓ Maintained 97% uptime for network and Internet services
- ✓ Increased the computer-to-student ratio from 1:3 to 1:2, with approximately 11,000 Chromebooks in use
- ✓ Maintained a comprehensive wireless network with more than 3,700 wireless access points
- ✓ 55% of all classrooms with interactive white boards, up from 8% four years ago

**E. IMPROVE HUMAN RESOURCES FUNCTIONS TO ENSURE ALL EMPLOYEES RECEIVE HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE.**

Since the start of the year, we have cut inefficiencies in payroll, including eliminating the printing and distribution of paycheck stubs for most employees.

KEY MILESTONES	
2016-17	Move all employees to a direct deposit system so that the number of paper checks is almost completely eliminated; this avoids needing to sort, deliver, and mail checks, and ensures employees have more immediate access to their pay. Improve the quality and use of information available on employee self service (including the ability to access all previous paychecks, W-2s, and direct deposit requests) online.
2017-19	Move all paper-based transactions for overtime and supplemental pay to an online system. Implement a survey for all employees to gather feedback on the key areas of support that human resources can better provide, and assess the quality of our customer service.

**F. IMPROVE PROCUREMENT AND PURCHASING.** We already have made progress in streamlining our procurement processes and holding vendors more accountable for performance. Going forward, our priorities are to:

**IMPROVE INTERDEPARTMENTAL PROCESSES.**

We are taking many steps to continue to streamline our efficiency and reduce redundancies.

KEY MILESTONES	
2016-17	Collaborate with Accounts Payable on procurement process improvements and maintenance through monthly meetings and other mechanisms.
2017-19	Work with the Information Services Department to develop an electronics recycling program.

*Improving the efficiency of back-office operations like HR and procurement frees up more funds for schools and classrooms*

## STRENGTHEN OUR VENDOR PROGRAM.

NPS annually contracts with a multitude of vendors for outside food and services. We need to better support and hold our vendors accountable for quality.

KEY MILESTONES	
2016-17	Conduct quarterly outreach sessions and in conjunction with community small business organizations.
2017-19	Enable the printing of purchase orders by vendors for more efficient delivery. Continue training on vendor interface eSupplier system.

## EXPAND PROCUREMENT SERVICES.

Our growing expertise, coupled with our buying power, makes it possible for us to consider offering our expertise to others in the community.

KEY MILESTONES	
2016-17	Explore feasibility of providing services to Newark non-profit organizations, which may include professional printing, replication, and graphic design services.
2017-19	Continue feasibility research. Pilot a service offering.



## INDICATORS OF PROGRESS

- ✓ Reduced overall transportation costs
- ✓ Reduced overall overtime hours
- ✓ Increased district-wide breakfast and lunch participation rates
- ✓ Increased number of lunch applications submitted
- ✓ Increased broadband capacity
- ✓ Decreased percentage of time that core district applications are down
- ✓ High participation rate on employee feedback survey
- ✓ High satisfaction rate with updated human resources processes
- ✓ Decreased time it takes for departments to procure goods and services

Even as we continue to push the state for additional and equitable funding, we are working to ensure that we allocate all available resources to best meet students' needs. Resources should follow the student, not be determined by outdated formulas nor historical practices. To that end, we have revamped our funding formula to provide more support for students who need the most assistance, such as English language learners (ELLs) or students with special education program needs. And to ensure our financial resources are serving Newark students, we are undergoing a months-long residency verification process.



**WEIGHTED STUDENT FUNDING**

The following table shows some of the wide differences in operating costs per student, which necessitate a weighted student funding formula.

GENERAL EDUCATION	
Kindergarten	\$6,692
Grades 1-5	\$4,949
Grades 6-8	\$4,601
Grades 9-12	\$6,246
SPECIAL EDUCATION	
Autism	\$18,744
Mild cognitive impairment	\$10,180
Behavioral disability	\$12,752
ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER (ADDITIONAL FUNDING AMOUNTS)	
ESL	\$1,919

- A. VERIFY RESIDENCY OF ALL STUDENTS ATTENDING NEWARK SCHOOLS.** We will make sure district resources are used to serve Newark students and that in-demand seats are available to Newark residents.

KEY MILESTONES	
<b>2016-17</b>	Schools will collect proof of residency for all students.
<b>2017-19</b>	Improve verification policies and process to ensure smooth execution and communication with schools and families.



*Making sure our current funding serves the city's students equitably, while identifying new revenue sources*

**B. ANNUALLY REVIEW WEIGHTED STUDENT FUNDING (WSF) MODEL.** We will continue to ensure dollars are following the student equitably and efficiently.

KEY MILESTONES	
2016-17	Assess the newly rebuilt WSF methodology to identify further opportunities for improvement.
2017-19	Continue to refine our WSF model to reflect the changing demographics and needs of our students and school leaders.

**C. ADD INTERNAL CAPACITY DEDICATED TO FINDING NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMPETITIVE GRANT FUNDING.** We will be more proactive in applying for federal, state, and local grants and competing for philanthropic support.

KEY MILESTONES	
2016-17	Assign a dedicated staff member to assess and optimize current grant funding sources. Beyond academic grant funds (e.g., Title 1 and IDEA), we intend to apply for operational grants in the areas of safety, security, and technology.
2017-19	Continue to explore additional federal, state, and local grant opportunities at all levels.

**D. ENSURE OUR CLASS-SIZE RATIOS ARE SUSTAINABLE.** Everyone wants smaller class sizes, but the reality is that some of our classes have far fewer students than can be justified given our current budget. We must find the balance between appropriate class size and acceptable staffing costs.

KEY MILESTONES	
2016-17	Conduct an assessment of classroom section sizes (over- and under-enrollment) across the district. Identify schools and grades in which more efficient section programming can be obtained without sacrificing educational quality. Find more creative ways for under-enrolled schools to share teachers and programs so that more students are served.
2017-19	Create and roll out policies about section programming that ensure students' needs are fully met, while creating leaner and more productive staffing models. Improve demographic models to develop more accurate long-term enrollment projections.



- ✓ Up-to-date residency information collected for all Newark students
- ✓ High levels of clarity and satisfaction with weighted student funding policies, as reported by principals



A knowledgeable Board of Education is essential to the effective oversight of the school district. The current scope of responsibility includes an approximately \$1 billion budget, 35,000 students, and 5,000 staff. Board members have earned certification, some are designated as “master board members,” and the Newark Board of Education as an entity is designated as a certified board through the New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA). The call for community schools by school board members in response to their constituents prompted the district’s SWCSI partnership with the Mayor. Board committees meet regularly and report out at the monthly business meetings. A Community Engagement Committee has been re-established after being dormant for the past four years. In the next three years, we will:

**A. CONTINUE TO BUILD EXPERTISE IN PREPARATION FOR GAINING AND MAINTAINING LOCAL CONTROL.**

KEY MILESTONES	
2016-17	Review and revise the Board’s Policy and Procedures Manual to align with best practices and current state regulations. Document all revisions to Policy and Procedures Manual, continue to participate in board training and to accrue credits with the NJSBA in order to maintain board certification status. Attend annual NJSBA Workshop and other training workshops and conferences. Abide by meeting attendance regulations; participate in at least two board retreats a year. Provide orientation and training for new board members and focus internal and externally supported training in areas of the Quality Single Accountability Continuum required to gain and maintain local control of the district.
2017-19	Assess progress on 2016-17 goals and modify, reset, and reinforce as needed.

*Strengthening the collaboration between NPS leadership and Board of Education members*

**B. IMPROVE STRUCTURE FOR DISTRICT/BOARD RELATIONS.** A shared vision about district goals and objectives and a culture of trust are the necessary conditions to foster the culture of cooperation needed to improve our schools. Building and maintaining transparent professional relationships is a constant challenge for many school boards and is magnified by the current dynamic of state control of NPS. Despite this reality, board members and district leaders collaborated on a number of initiatives during the 2015-16 school year, including the SWCSI, on-going board sub-committees, and the addition of the Community Engagement Sub-Committee. Operations have been improved with the implementation of Electronic School Board, and senior leadership has been more forthcoming with information than in the recent past.

## KEY MILESTONES

2016-17

Strengthen information flow to and from the board through improved technology capabilities. Activate Community Engagement Sub-Committee. Improve overall committee participation and committee reporting structure.

2017-19

Continue to strengthen NPS-Board collaboration, communication, and operations.



## INDICATORS OF PROGRESS

- ✓ Continue high board member attendance at monthly meetings
- ✓ Board members participate in professional development opportunities inside and outside NPS



# Acknowledgments

This plan was developed with the insights and support of many hundreds of Newarkers — teachers, principals, parents and family members, students, NPS staff, Board of Education members, the Mayor and Municipal Council members and their staffs, business leaders, higher education leaders, and community members.

In particular, we would like to acknowledge the important contributions of the following:

## REVIEW COMMITTEE

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Provided overall strategic direction and specific feedback on the drafts

- Arcelio Aponte, Vice Chancellor for Administration and Chief Financial Officer, Rutgers University-Newark
- Antoinette Baskerville-Richardson, Chairperson, Newark Board of Education
- Mateus Baptista, Policy Advisor, Office of the Mayor
- Mary Bennett, Chairperson, Newark Education Success Board
- Gayle Chaneyfield-Jenkins, Central Ward Councilwoman, Newark Municipal Council
- Mildred Crump, Council President, Newark Municipal Council
- Joseph Dellafave, Executive Director, Ironbound Community Corporation
- Whitney Farrand, Teacher, Mount Vernon School
- Lenore Furman, Teacher, Abington Avenue School
- Chaleeta Hines, Principal, BRICK Peshine Elementary School
- Wilhelmina Holder, Parent and Student Advocate, Newark
- Michael Iovino, Teacher and Newark Teachers Union Representative, Technology High School
- Jim Johnson, Representative, Local 32
- Raymond Ocasio, Executive Director, La Casa de Don Pedro
- Leah Owens, Member, Newark Board of Education
- Ameenah Poole, Teacher, Barringer High School STEAM Academy
- Ivette Rosario, Parent, Newark Public Schools
- Mario Santos, Principal, East Side High School
- Lavar Young, Newark City Director, Black Alliance for Educational Options

## WORKING GROUPS

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Working groups took the lead in beginning to shape specific strategies and actions in the plan. A working group of 10 - 15 people was created for each of the four identified priorities. We are sincerely grateful for all those that took part in these working group meetings, below we have listed how these groups were constituted:

- Priority 1 – Approximately 10 NPS teachers and school administrators
- Priority 2 – Approximately 10 NPS teachers and school administrators
- Priority 3 – A mix of approximately 15 community members, elected officials, community partner organizations, school administrators and teachers.
- Priority 4 – A mix of approximately 15 business and university partners, community members, community partners, NPS school operations and facility staff members, school administrators, and teachers.

## COMMUNITY PARTNERS

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Led the stakeholder meetings in each ward that provided early input

- Ironbound Community Corporation
- La Casa de Don Pedro
- Newark Fairmont Promise Neighborhood & Urban League of Essex County
- Strong Healthy Community Initiative
- United Way of Essex & West Hudson

## FOCUS GROUPS

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We held structured conversations with groups of teachers, principals, parents, students, and leaders of community-based organizations.

## NEWARK BOARD OF EDUCATION

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- Antoinette Baskerville-Richardson, Chairperson
- Crystal C. Fonseca, Vice Chairperson
- Dashay Carter
- Kim Gaddy
- Donald G. Jackson, Jr.
- Marques-Aquil Lewis
- Leah Owens
- Tave Padilla
- Philip C. Seelinger, Jr.
- Laura D. Gould, Student Member

## NPS STEERING COMMITTEE

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Oversaw and managed the process from start to finish

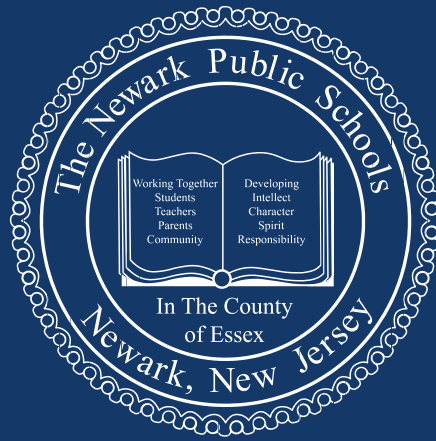
- Savita Bharadwa, Senior Manager of Strategy
- Edward Hui, Chief Strategy Officer
- Roger Leon, Assistant Superintendent of Administration
- Paul Nedeau, Deputy Chief of Staff
- Margarita Muniz, Executive Director, Office of Family and Community Engagement

KSA-Plus Communications provided external consulting support and drafted the plan. Tangible Designs did the graphic design.









**Christopher D. Cerf**  
**Superintendent**

**Newark Board of Education**

Antoinette Baskerville-Richardson, Chairperson

Crystal C. Fonseca, Vice Chairperson

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Kim Gaddy

Donald G. Jackson, Jr.

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**Newark Public Schools**

[www.nps.k12.nj.us/strategic-plan](http://www.nps.k12.nj.us/strategic-plan)