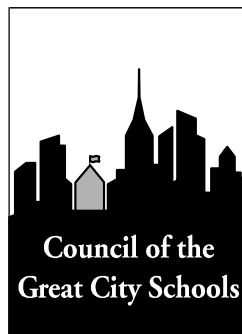


# Raising Student Achievement in the Newark Public Schools

Report of the Strategic Support Team  
of the  
Council of the Great City Schools

Submitted to the  
Newark Public Schools

By the Council of the Great City Schools



June 2007

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The Council of the Great City Schools thanks the many individuals who contributed to this project to improve student achievement in the Newark Public Schools. Their efforts and commitment were critical to our ability to present the district with the best possible proposals.

First, we thank Superintendent of Schools Marion A. Bolden. It is not easy to ask for the kind of review that a project like this entails. It takes courage, openness, and an uncompromising commitment to the city's children. She has those qualities in abundance.

Second, we thank the Newark Public Schools Advisory Board for requesting and supporting this effort and for meeting with our team to discuss issues and challenges that the district faces.

Third, we thank the staff members and teachers in the Newark Public Schools, who provided all the time, documents, and data that the Council team needed in order to do its work. Their openness and enthusiasm were critical to our understanding of the challenges faced by the Newark school system.

Fourth, we thank the many individuals, groups, organizations, and associations with which we met. Our only regret is that we were unable to meet with everyone that we know had something valuable to contribute.

Fifth, the Council thanks the school districts and organizations that contributed staff to this effort. Everyone contributed his or her time *pro bono* to help the Newark school district improve. The enthusiasm and generosity of these individuals serve as another example of how the nation's urban public school systems are working together to help each other improve student performance.

Finally, I thank Council staff member Ricki Price-Baugh, who drafted this report, and whose skills were critical to the success of this effort. Thank you all.

Michael Casserly  
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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND NEXT STEPS**

**FINDINGS**

The Newark Public Schools (NPS) has been at the center of reform and improvement efforts in New Jersey for the better part of 12 years. The results of these efforts are both significant and frustrating. The school district has made substantial progress over the last few years; but it also has a long way to go before it attains the level of excellence that everyone in the city wants. This report discusses both sides of the story.

The state seized control of the school district in 1995 after a series of scandals and considerable public outcry about the condition of the city's public schools. Beverly Hall, a veteran of the New York City Public Schools, was installed by the state as the school system's first superintendent following the takeover. Hall's four-year tenure ended in 1999 with her acceptance of the superintendency of the Atlanta Public Schools and the elevation of Marion Bolden to head the Newark school system. A Newark native, a seasoned administrator, and a former teacher in the Newark system, Bolden is now one of the longest serving big-city school superintendents in the nation, and has led the district's comeback.

The Newark schools were also the target of and ultimate beneficiary of the Abbott decision, a landmark state financial adequacy case that worked its way through the New Jersey courts over a 20-year period and eventually led to considerably greater funding for Newark and a number of New Jersey's poorest communities and schools. The ruling also required the beneficiaries to set up a series of school reform models that ultimately proved to be of mixed effectiveness.

Superintendent Bolden has been particularly aggressive over the last eight years in her efforts to turn around a system that was plagued by a negative national image. In some ways, her efforts have been heroic. She put considerable energy into boosting staff expectations for student learning, enhancing professional development for principals and teachers, aligning curriculum, installing standard reading and math programs, developing interim assessments, assigning literacy and math coaches, mounting new extended-time programs and other intervention strategies, and improving the overall climate of the schools. None of these were small steps in a district with achievement levels well below those of the state. Indeed, these efforts have set a foundation on which to build future progress.

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Particularly noteworthy efforts over those eight years included the district's 21st Century Learning Centers; its After-school Youth Development Program; its strengthened magnet school programs at Arts, Science, Technology, and University High Schools; its new career-based programs and expanded preschool efforts; its improved bilingual initiatives; its parent involvement and student health clinics; its reinvigoration of music and arts programs; and its elimination of the budget deficit. The district also wired its schools for the Internet; installed surveillance cameras; improved compliance with state and federal program requirements; upgraded facilities; and stabilized the payroll system.

Along the way, the school district, its teachers, staff, and students received numerous awards for their accomplishments. The Branch Brook School and Ann Street School were named a National Blue Ribbon Schools, and a third school, Harriet Tubman, is currently nominated as a Blue Ribbon School. Science High School, moreover, continued to win the state Lincoln Douglas Debate year after year; Abington Avenue and Ann Street schools were singled out for recognition by the Business Coalition for Educational Excellence; First Avenue School won the National School Change Award; and Malcolm X. Shabazz and Weequahic High School won numerous national marching band contests. City athletic teams reemerged as winners. Robotics programs were established in five high schools, and the district saw continuous recognition from NASA and the National Science Foundation.

None of these accomplishments were trivial, in that the school system was rebounding from years of neglect and deterioration. The cumulative effects of the instructional reforms and the resources to carry them out were positive. Elementary school reading scores on the state's test rose steadily through 2002, outpacing the state's overall gains, and elementary math scores have shown steady gains through 2006. In addition, the district has seen a continuous increase in the number and percent of students graduating from its schools.

Still, the district is faced with considerable challenges. Its reading scores in the elementary schools have leveled off since 2002, although its math scores continue to climb unabated at the elementary school level. The city's high schools, however, perform at very low levels, despite some bright spots. Most of the district's graduates who aspire to go on to college do not have college-entrance exam scores that would enable them to be accepted by a competitive college or university. And students who do not aspire to attend college are performing well below state averages. Moreover, these averages have not improved much over the last several years.

At the same time, student enrollment is slowly declining, pressures for more radical reforms are increasing, the public's infatuation with charter schools and other choice options is rising, and the city's overall economic well-being is under duress. And without a substantial uptick in achievement scores, the district and its schools will find itself deeper into *No Child Left Behind* and state sanctions in the years ahead.

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Nonetheless, the school district's leadership is committed to increasing student achievement and adamantly rejects the idea that it cannot accomplish more. The district's superintendent and the Advisory Board asked the Council of the Great City Schools, a coalition of the nation's largest urban public school systems, to review the instructional program of the Newark Public Schools and propose ways to accelerate gains in student achievement. To accomplish this task, the Council assembled a Strategic Support Team of instructional specialists from other major urban school districts with solid reputations for improving student achievement.

In general, the Council found a school system that was generally well resourced and staffed with a considerable number of talented and skilled individuals. The Council also found a district with many solid instructional programs and practices in place. It saw hundreds of classrooms in which teachers were working hard to give students every opportunity for a brighter future. And it witnessed a determination among many to improve the schools to levels well beyond their current performance.

At the same time, the Council's team saw irregular program implementation, uncertain curricular alignment, spotty classroom monitoring, weak instructional rigor, low expectations for student performance, fractured professional development, poor use of data to inform instructional decision-making, and an accountability system that was too new to have had much effect. The team was particularly concerned about the high schools in the district, where instructional rigor was modest at best and sometimes nonexistent.

It was the opinion of the team that the school district's reading achievement has leveled off for at least three reasons. First, reading scores statewide have leveled off, and the performance of students in the Newark school district is simply reflecting this trend. Statewide, math scores have increased and the growth in scores among Newark's students actually have outpaced those of students in the state as a whole. What the Newark school system needs to do in the case of reading, however, is to break out of the statewide pattern of lethargy and begin closing the performance gap with the state.

Second, the district's reading program has been in place for less than two years. The district's math program, by contrast, has been in place for more than five years. It often takes principals and teachers several years to get used to a new reading program and produce higher scores because of it.

Third, program implementation, staff training, and curricular alignment appear to be very irregular, making it difficult to gather momentum behind the instructional reforms because people continue to pull in multiple directions. In some ways, the district has now picked its lower hanging "instructional fruit," and the next steps in its reforms will entail reaching much higher.

The Newark school district has many talented people who are quite capable of considerably greater improvement. The school district and the city do not need to restart its reforms at this point. They are well along. Instead, the district needs to deepen the



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reforms it has been pursuing and make them more coherent. We strongly encourage the school system to ratchet up the precision and intensity with which its reforms are pursued. We were very encouraged by many of the things we saw in this school system, and are hopeful for its future and the futures of the students that it serves.

The team prepared a list of recommendations for the superintendent and the board to consider as they work to accelerate student achievement and think through the next steps in the school system's overall reforms.

### **NEXT STEPS**

The Council of the Great City Schools compared—or benchmarked—the instructional program of the Newark Public Schools against those of other urban school districts that have made substantial progress in raising student achievement. Because of these comparisons, the Strategic Support Team of the Council recommends that the city and the school district consider the following—

- 1. Encourage the mayor, the business community, community groups, the school board, and the administrative staff to unite their efforts around a single vision and direction for the school district that is defined around higher student achievement.**

The Newark Public Schools have made greater progress over the last several years than most community advocates appear to realize. We urge the mayor, business groups, community activists, and the school community to coalesce around a single vision for the city's schools. The research on urban school reform suggests strongly that accelerating and sustaining student-achievement gains rests, in large measure, on the ability of the community to pull together in a single direction around an agreed-upon set of reforms that are defined around better instruction. The Newark school district has a number of strong and convincing partnerships with local universities, community groups, unions, and some businesses. It also has a well-regarded superintendent and many hardworking, capable staff members who are determined to raise student achievement and continue reforming the school district. And it has a District Advisory Board that is committed to ensuring that the city's children are educated to the highest standards. The mayor, as well, sees the future of the city resting on the schools. Still, it is not clear that the city's leadership, its schools, and businesses want the same things in the same ways. Some of these differences are simply political and ideological; some are substantive. Either way, city leaders need to find a better way to get on the same page and—

- Build a single communitywide vision for the school system and its direction.
- Define that vision around the acceleration of student achievement, the retention of students in schools, the improvement of the secondary schools, and a shared sense of mission.

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- Consider conducting a series of community forums, parent outreach efforts, and a sharply focused media campaign to communicate and discuss the district's progress and next steps.
- Use these forums or other community-building activities to encourage greater parental involvement in schools; marshal community leaders to encourage higher expectations for school and student performance; unify community efforts around school reform and improvement; develop a citizens' army of afterschool tutors, and spur a greater sense of urgency for improving the schools and involving community advocates in doing so.

### **2. Set clearer expectations for the academic performance of students at both the district and school levels.**

The district's overall strategic plan is actually composed of separate plans written independently by department heads and assistant superintendents. Each school, moreover, develops its own improvement plan. The district should—

- Set more ambitious stretch goals and targets for student achievement that go beyond *No Child Left Behind's* "safe harbor" objectives and state goals.<sup>1</sup>
- Develop a series of crossfunctional teams to revisit and revise the district's academic strategic plan to ensure greater cohesion and collaboration across departments and less duplication and conflict.
- Make academic goals for each racial, economic, and language group more explicit, so that it is clear that there is an unambiguous vision to narrow achievement gaps citywide.
- Establish clearer and more stringent goals for increasing participation in Advanced Placement (AP) courses, setting targets for gifted and talented program participation, lowering the dropout rate, and achieving higher performance on college entrance tests.
- Revise the current school improvement plans to ensure that school goals align with systemwide goals and goals for the academic attainment of each of the system's subgroups.

### **3. Broaden and stiffen staff accountability for district priorities.**

The district has taken an important and relatively unusual step of making student achievement a factor in the evaluation of senior-instructional staff members, directors, principals, and high school department chairs. Assistant superintendents and principals

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<sup>1</sup> "Safe harbor" refers to the minimum progress that a school can make in the short run to meet *No Child Left Behind* requirements.

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even lose salary increments when goals are not achieved. As a next step, the district might—

- Increase the weight given to increasing student achievement in all staff evaluation forms and procedures.
- Ensure that principals' evaluation instruments include a measure for monitoring implementation of the district's curriculum, coaching teachers, and following the system's pacing guides.
- Modify over time the sanctions calling for withholding salary increments so that greater emphasis is placed on rewarding goal attainment.

### **4. Strengthen the use of the curriculum, rather than the textbooks, as the foundation for classroom work, professional development, benchmark testing, and monitoring.**

The district has selected strong textbooks and programs in reading and mathematics that have been shown to be effective in other cities, and has provided professional development on their implementation. The Newark Public Schools requires a 90-minute reading block and 75 minutes of math instruction daily in the elementary schools. In addition, English language learners are expected to master the same core content contained in the general education program. Each content-area department has developed curriculum statements that describe the philosophical approaches, policies, and practices for each area. But textbooks cannot replace or substitute for a well-designed curriculum with a clearly-defined set of objectives that are tightly aligned with state standards. Some of the district's curriculum guides provide better direction than others do. And some of the curriculum materials are not clear about what the teacher is expected to teach. To be certain that the district's academic expectations are communicated clearly and can be supported and monitored, the district should—

- Conduct an independent analysis of the gaps between and among the district's curricula in each content area, the district's adopted textbooks, and state standards and assessments, including the SAT at the high school level, to identify alignment problems and mismatches.
- Fill any gaps with district-identified or -developed supplemental materials so that teachers do not have to seek out resources on their own.
- Revise the curriculum and the pacing guides around a common set of document specifications. To the extent possible, provide teachers with all the information they need in one place, rather than having them search among a variety of documents.
- Revise the curriculum documents to clarify the exact meaning of the state standards, including explicit explanations of what students are expected to learn

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and are expected to be able to do—at a specific level of rigor—at each grade level.

- Provide teachers with examples of quality student writing expected at each grade level, with commentary, analysis, and suggestions on next steps for improvement.
- Revise pacing guides to ensure that all concepts and skills that are eligible for state testing are taught, practiced, and mastered before state examinations are administered.

### **5. Refocus and prioritize districtwide professional development around areas of greatest leverage.**

The district and its partners offer a wide variety of professional development on a multitude of topics. The district has an induction program for new teachers, and it trains its own *Reading Recovery* teachers, among many other professional development efforts. The next step for the district should be to design and offer a more coherent and strategic program of training that is tied explicitly to the curriculum and the academic goals of the district. To do this, the district should—

- Develop a districtwide professional development plan that is aligned more explicitly with the district's academic goals and priorities.
- Determine which district academic priorities should require mandatory—rather than voluntary—professional development for all or just some teachers.
- Establish a districtwide professional development tracking and evaluation system. Assess the effectiveness of the professional development by how well it is implemented in the classrooms and what impact it has on student achievement. Include evaluations by type or form of the professional development.
- Develop and implement a program of professional development for central office staff, principals, and teachers on effective instructional leadership; alignment and content of the curriculum; interpretation and use of data; the use of revised pacing guides; the use of supplemental materials; the use of instructional intervention systems when the data indicate that students are falling behind; the use of differential instruction for limited-English proficient and special education students; and classroom observations.
- Explicitly boost the quality and nature of the district's professional development for teachers to raise the level of instructional rigor in core subjects to match that expected in the state's standards.
- Expand the district's new-teacher induction program to encompass three years of targeted support on district programs, content and pedagogy, use of classroom time, and classroom management.

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- Develop a districtwide calendar of professional development.

### **6. Strengthen classroom monitoring, and rein in the latitude that assistant superintendents have to deviate from the district’s instructional program.**

The district has standardized its instructional program, a strategy that is consistent with urban school districts that show substantial gains in student achievement. The district has provided literacy coaches and math-teacher leaders in every school. It has developed “look for” protocols to monitor classroom practice. And it encourages schools to offer after-hours classes for students and to engage in improvement planning. Some assistant superintendents and principals, however, feel free to initiate and implement their own instructional strategies that may vary with or undercut the districtwide program without coordinating with the central office or evaluating the variations. The district should—

- Ensure that schools are following the district’s curriculum and pacing guides, or determine why they are not doing so and establish a process that addresses any identified implementation issues.
- Revise the district’s walkthrough protocols, with input from principals, teachers, and the Teaching and Learning office, so that the protocols focus more on instructional observations, curriculum implementation, pacing, and evidence of student work at needed levels of rigor.
- Reinforce the need for assistant superintendents to follow and monitor implementation of the district’s instructional program or eliminate the SLT offices.
- Expand the school-improvement planning process to include a greater emphasis on data analysis to inform instructional strategies.
- Clarify expectations for literacy and math coaches to ensure that their work is more closely aligned with the district’s achievement goals and with professional development. Link the evaluation of coaches to gains in student achievement and implementation of districtwide initiatives.

### **7. Strengthen the data system by which schools make their instructional decisions, and establish a three- to five-year plan to evaluate major academic programs and their effects on student achievement.**

The district has considerable data and it has joined a consortium to implement quarterly and midterm assessments that follow student progress throughout the year. Moreover, assistant superintendents are charged with working with principals to analyze data for their instructional implications. As a next step, the district might—

- Ensure that quarterly tests are anchored to, and aligned with, state standards and testing.

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- Strengthen central-office use of student performance data to analyze questions related to modifying the curriculum, prioritizing professional development, and improving instruction and intervention.
- Encourage greater collaboration between the curriculum and research units on the interpretation, analysis, and presentation of data to help principals understand underlying reasons for trends and implications for practice.
- Begin creating a districtwide data warehouse that includes benchmark and state test results with user-friendly access for administrators and teachers to student performance information.
- Use long-term, school-by-school matched-cohort data to understand better the programmatic reasons for gains in the district's fastest-improving schools.
- Consolidate evaluation dollars from federal categorical programs and send them to the research and evaluation office to increase staff capacity to assess program effectiveness.
- Create a calendar for the regular evaluation of district programs and initiatives, and include an evaluation of any planned variations in school improvement plans in the calendar.
- Consider moving toward a Web-based service or a commercial service to collect, analyze, and return benchmark/quarterly test data within 48 hours of administration.
- Develop an evaluation plan to accompany any new district initiatives before they are rolled out. The evaluations should include a component assessing the initiative's effect on student achievement.

### **8. Strengthen and focus district oversight and support for its lowest-performing elementary and middle schools and students.**

The district provides *Reading Recovery* teachers to its lowest-performing students in 65 of its schools, a promising strategy given the traditional effectiveness of teachers trained in this program. The district is also a provider of supplemental educational services (SES). It has invested in a number of reading intervention systems, including *Read 180*, and has placed math coaches in its lowest-performing secondary schools. But many schools have been unable to move out of School Improvement status under the provisions of *No Child Left Behind*, and the district does not appear to have a clear strategy for how to intervene. The team proposes that the district—

- Require that all schools in School Improvement 3 status or greater under *No Child Left Behind* get approval for any school-based professional development, major instructional purchases, or the hiring of any consultants.

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- Work with the union to create financial and other incentives to attract the best teachers into the lowest-performing schools.
- Revamp the hiring and recruitment timeline in order to contract with teachers sooner in the calendar year.
- Have the central office develop sample protocols for class scheduling and instructional time in schools.
- Reconsider the use of *Compass Learning* for special educational services in language arts, since district evaluations of the program show that it is producing minimal gains in that area. The problem may be weak alignment of program materials with the rigor that state assessments are measuring.
- Ensure that intervention strategies outlined in the district's Promotion Policy and PRC Manual are implemented with students who are falling behind in core subjects and grades over the course of the school year.
- Enforce the student code of conduct, student registration and withdrawal procedures, transfer of student records, and district communications to schools in a uniform manner.

### **9. More closely align the district's pre-K curriculum with its K-2 academic program, and strengthen the gifted and talented program.**

The district has an extensive pre-K program and employs several systems for evaluating early childhood efforts. As next steps, the district should—

- Evaluate the extent to which the pre-K curriculum and the various programs (contract providers and district providers) support preparation for kindergarten and the first grade.
- Develop or contract out the development of materials and tools to help implement the *Creative Curriculum*, ensuring that it is well articulated to the K-2 program, and that the meaning of each objective in the program is sufficiently clarified to avoid misinterpretation by teachers.
- Provide all teachers with training in the use of gifted strategies and, over the long run, expand the gifted and talented program.

### **10. Strengthen coursework and support programs at the secondary school level that will ensure academic success and preparation for postsecondary opportunities.**

The district has taken a number of steps to strengthen its secondary schools. High school department chairs are allotted additional time to support teachers in their content areas. Rising ninth-graders who score below proficient on the Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment (GEPA) can attend a summer enrichment program, and ninth-grade classes

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are held to no more than 24 students. The district has been awarded \$14 million in federal *Striving Readers* funds. Tutorials, alternative schools, and programs are available to high school students. The district has begun moving to small learning communities as part of the requirements instituted in response to Abbott, the landmark state financial adequacy case. These steps have improved graduation rates, but overall performance remains low. As next steps, the district should—

- Review, upgrade, and articulate the reading, math, and science programs used with students in grades 5-8, so that they link with the skills that students will need to achieve in core courses in the 9th grade.
- Backmap the curriculum from grade 12 down to at least the sixth grade to ensure that students have participated in courses that are sufficiently rigorous so that they graduate with the skills to gain entry into a competitive college or university, or other postsecondary career training program.
- Develop a comprehensive set of strategies to encourage students to take more rigorous courses at the secondary-school level. These strategies might include:
  - ✚ Expanding “Advancement *via* Individual Determination” (AVID) programs to build a stronger pipeline for AP and college preparatory courses.
  - ✚ Tying PSAT results to revamped counseling programs to encourage more students to take core courses beyond minimum requirements.
  - ✚ Measuring and enhancing the rigor of current secondary-school courses through clear expectations, support, monitoring, and professional development.
  - ✚ Ensuring that end-of-course exams in core courses go beyond the requirements of the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA).
- Make student achievement the main focus of the small learning communities initiative.
- Require students who have failed the GEPA to attend afterschool tutorials or supplemental services and a district-provided or private summer school. Reach out to parents for their support in having their children participate.
- Monitor the achievement results of students who attend the tutorials to sharpen the content and strategies used in the instructional sessions and appraise the success of individual tutors.
- Implement a positive behavior program starting at the earliest grades.

The Council’s instructional team devised these recommendations to improve the academic achievement of students in the Newark Public Schools. The proposals are built



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around strategies that have proven to be effective in raising performance in other major urban school systems. There is little else in the research or in practical experience to suggest that strategies beyond those described here are likely to have much, if any, effect on student achievement. Here is where a note of caution is in order for community leaders who wish to make more radical organizational or structural changes. Governance and other changes in the overall organizational architecture of a school system have rarely been effective in boosting student attainment, despite all the press releases to the contrary. Such changes often have an immediate appeal to the press and some community leaders because they suggest more robust and aggressive action. But there is nothing to suggest that these governance measures have any effect on classroom practice or—ultimately—on student achievement. We strongly encourage the city to pull together in pursuit of the kinds of instructional reforms described in this report. They have proven to be effective in other cities, and can be effective in Newark as well. The Council of the Great City Schools stands ready to help the city and the school system as it marches forward.

## **INTRODUCTION: PURPOSE AND ORIGIN OF THE PROJECT**

### **OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT**

The Council of the Great City Schools, the nation's primary coalition of large urban school systems, presents this report and its recommendations for improving student achievement to the Newark Public Schools. We thank Superintendent of Schools Marion A. Bolden, Assistant Superintendent Gayle Griffin, and their staff teams for coordinating this project.

To conduct its work, the Council assembled a Strategic Support Team of curriculum and instructional leaders from other urban school districts across the country that have worked to address many of the same issues faced by the Newark Public Schools. Council staff members accompanied and supported the team and prepared this report summarizing its findings and proposals.

The team reviewed the school district's efforts to improve student achievement, benchmarked the district's practices against those of urban school systems that have seen significant gains in student achievement, and recommended strategies to improve further the student achievement in the district.

The team made its first site visit to the Newark Public Schools on September 17-20, 2006. The team's meetings began with a discussion with Superintendent Bolden and her management team on the challenges faced by the district, and the efforts the district was making to overcome them. That initial discussion was followed by two days of fact-finding and a day devoted to synthesizing the team's findings and proposing preliminary strategies for improvement. The team debriefed the superintendent at the end of the site visit. A second team returned to the district on January 22-23, 2007, and visited classrooms in nine schools.<sup>2</sup> Those observations were incorporated into the report.

We commend Superintendent Bolden, the school board, and staff for their courage and openness in conducting a peer review such as this. It is not easy to subject oneself and the institution one leads to the scrutiny that such an analysis entails, particularly when the state was conducting a review at the same time. These leaders deserve the public's thanks.

### **PROJECT GOALS**

The purposes of the Council's review were to—

- Review the instructional program of the Newark Public Schools and assess the program's potential for accelerating student achievement further.

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<sup>2</sup> Schools visited included Burnet Street Elementary, Camden Street Elementary, Marin Middle, Abington Elementary School, Lincoln Elementary School, West Side High, West Side Success Academy, Harriet Tubman Elementary School, and University High School.

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- Propose ways for the Newark Public Schools to strengthen its instructional program and accelerate gains in student reading and math achievement.
- Compare and contrast the instructional practices of the Newark Public Schools with the instructional practices of other urban school systems across the country that are making significant gains in student achievement.
- Identify expertise, resources, strategies, and materials from other city school systems across the country that the Newark Public Schools could use to accelerate student performance.

### **THE WORK OF THE STRATEGIC SUPPORT TEAM**

The Strategic Support Team visited the Newark Public Schools September 17- 20, 2006, as noted. The team was made up of curriculum and instructional leaders from other urban school systems that have made significant progress in improving student achievement.

The team used the initial discussion with Superintendent Bolden and her management team to focus its subsequent two days of fact-finding. This work included extensive interviews with central-office staff members, board members, principals, teachers, and representatives of outside organizations, parents, and others.<sup>3</sup> The team also reviewed numerous documents and reports and analyzed data on student performance.

The team examined the district's broad instructional strategies, materials, core reading and math programs, assessment programs, and professional development efforts. It also reviewed district priorities and analyzed how the strategies and programs of the Newark school system reflected those priorities. The team briefed Superintendent Bolden on preliminary findings and proposals at the end of the first site visit.

The second team visited the district in January 2007. The nine schools visited by the team included both high-performing and low-performing schools based on Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) data. The team looked for evidence of teacher use of adopted reading and mathematics programs, differentiated instruction, student work assignments, and overall level of instruction and expectations. The team spoke with principals about how they used data and monitored classroom work. The team recognizes that it visited only a subset of schools, made only a single visit to each of them, so results need to be viewed with caution. Each classroom visit was short and may or may not have reflected a typical day for students. In visiting about 200 classrooms, however, trends did emerge that are described in this report.

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<sup>3</sup> The Council's peer reviews are based on interviews of staff and others, a review of documents provided by the district, observations of operations, and our professional judgment. The team conducting the interviews rely on the willingness of those interviewed to be truthful and forthcoming, and make every effort to provide an objective assessment of district functions but cannot always judge the accuracy of statements made by all interviewees.

## Raising Student Achievement in the Newark Public Schools

This approach of using peers to provide technical assistance to urban school districts is unique to the Council and its members, and is proving effective for a number of reasons.

First, the approach allows the superintendent to work directly with talented, successful practitioners from other urban districts that have a record of accomplishment.

Second, the recommendations developed by these peer teams have validity because the individuals who developed them have faced many of the same problems now encountered by the school system requesting Council review. These individuals are aware of the challenges faced by urban schools, and their strategies have been tested under the most rigorous conditions.

Third, using senior urban school managers from other communities is faster and less expensive than retaining a management-consulting firm. It does not take team members long to determine what is going on in a district. This rapid learning curve permits reviews that are faster and less expensive than could be secured from experts who are not as well versed in urban education.

Finally, the teams comprise a pool of expertise that a school system superintendent, board, and staff can use to implement the recommendations or to develop other strategies. Members of the Strategic Support Teams included the following individuals—

STRATEGIC SUPPORT TEAM	SCHOOL VISIT TEAM
Shelly Ferguson Math Specialist San Diego Public Schools San Diego, CA	Lois McGee Reading Specialist Philadelphia Public Schools Philadelphia, PA
Nancy Timmons Former Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction Fort Worth Independent School District Fort Worth, TX	Denise Walston Math Specialist Norfolk Public Schools Norfolk, VA
Michael Casserly Executive Director Council of the Great City Schools Washington, DC	Michael Casserly Executive Director Council of the Great City Schools Washington, DC
Ricki Price-Baugh Director of Academic Achievement Council of the Great City Schools Washington, DC	Ricki Price-Baugh Director of Academic Achievement Council of the Great City Schools Washington, DC

### CONTENTS OF THIS REPORT

This report begins with an Executive Summary of the issues facing the Newark Schools as it works to boost student achievement. It includes an outline of the proposals that the Council and its Strategic Support Team is making. Chapter 1 presents an overview of the Newark Public Schools and its student performance. Chapter 2 presents the findings of the Strategic Support Team and its recommendations for improving student achievement. Chapter 3 provides a summary and discussion of the findings and recommendations.

The appendices of the report contain additional information for the reader. Appendix A presents information on the percentage of general students passing state tests in each school, along with information on each school's accountability status on NCLB. Appendix B lists the people that the team interviewed. Appendix C lists the documents that the team reviewed. Appendix D presents brief biographical sketches of team members. And Appendix E gives a brief description of the Council of the Great City Schools and the teams it has conducted over the last several years.

The Council has shied away from using a specific school reform model to guide its fact-finding or recommendations. Instead, it has taken a distinctly district-level orientation to reform and tailors its reports specifically to each district and the particular challenges that the district faces. The Council recognizes that each city is different. No city has the same mixture of student demographics, staffing patterns, and resources that Newark has. The Council has now conducted more than 140 Strategic Support Teams in nearly 35 major city school districts in a variety of instructional, management, and operational areas.

The Council developed a protocol to benchmark urban districts against some of the nation's significantly improving urban districts. The instrument is based upon the groundbreaking report *Foundations for Success* conducted for the Council by MDRC, a national social-science research firm.<sup>4</sup> This research revealed key organizational and instructional strategies behind the academic gains of some of the fastest-improving urban school systems in the nation, and described how those strategies differ from those in districts that have not seen much progress from their reforms.

It is also important for the reader to note that this project did not examine the entire school system. This analysis cannot be considered an audit as such. For example, we did not spend time looking at food services, special education, federal programs, transportation, personnel, facilities management, security, or other operational functions. The Strategic Support Team did not conduct a detailed review of staffing allocations and did not examine staff qualifications. We did not look at school board policies or other governance issues. Our focus in this report is exclusively on student achievement and how to improve it.

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<sup>4</sup> Snipes, J., Doolittle, F., Herlihy, C. (2002). *Foundations for Success: Case Studies of How Urban School Systems Improve Student Achievement*. MDRC for the Council of the Great City Schools.

### CHAPTER 1. BACKGROUND

#### SCHOOL DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

The Newark Public Schools (NPS) is the largest school district in the state of New Jersey. Its origins date to 1676 with the building of Barringer High School, the third oldest public high school in the nation. The school system serves a city of approximately 274,000 residents that is ranked among the poorest in the nation.

A nine-member elected Advisory Board governs the Newark Public School District. The Advisory Board makes policy recommendations to the administration and provides district oversight and community input to the schools. All nine members of the Advisory Board are elected at large.

In July 1995, the state of New Jersey assumed operating control of the district. Marion Bolden, a Newark native, was appointed superintendent by the state in 1999, following the tenure of Beverly Hall. The school district is organized into five School Leadership Teams (SLTs). One of the teams is dedicated to high schools, and the other four are organized by areas or wards of the city.

#### STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

The Newark school district enrolled some 41,889 students in 2004-2005, the most recent year for which comparable data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) are available.<sup>5</sup> The district enrolls 3.2 percent of the state's public school total, but the city's students are more than twice as likely to be poor as their counterparts statewide. Some 73.2 percent of NPS students are eligible for a free or reduced price lunch, almost three times higher than the statewide rate.

Some 59.4 percent of NPS students were African-American in 2004-2005, about three times the proportion statewide. Newark also had almost twice the proportion of Hispanic students—31.9 percent—than the state, 18.5 percent. Newark's enrollment was 7.9 percent white, compared with 59.8 percent statewide. And 16.2 percent of the district's enrollment was composed of students with an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP), similar to the statewide percentage of 16.8. (See Table 1.)

The average school in Newark enrolled about 559 students, compared with an average of 528 students per school statewide.<sup>6</sup> The district has a slightly lower student-to-teacher ratio (10.7) than the average New Jersey school district (12). Finally, the per-pupil expenditure in Newark is about \$5,000 higher than the statewide average. (See Table 1.)

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<sup>5</sup> NCES data are used in this portion of the report in order to make comparisons with other major urban school systems across the country.

<sup>6</sup> Statistic includes all schools – elementary, middle, and high.

## Raising Student Achievement in the Newark Public Schools

**Table 1. Comparison of Newark Public Schools with New Jersey Schools and the Great City Schools, 2004-2005<sup>7</sup>**

	Newark	New Jersey	CGCS
Enrollment	41,889	1,331,364	7,384,270
% African-American	59.4%	18.6%	35.0%
% Hispanic	31.9%	18.5%	32.0%
% White	7.9%	59.8%	24.0%
% Other	0.8%	3.1%	9.0%
% Free/Reduced Price Lunch	73.2%	27.3	61.0%
% with IEPs	16.2%	16.8%	11.0%
% English Language Learners	8.0%	4.4%	14.0%
Pupil/Teacher Ratio	10.7	12.0	20.0
Number of Schools	75	2,521	11,419
Average Enrollment per School	558.5	528	647
Current Expenditures per Pupil (2003-04)	\$17,652	\$12,227	\$8,608

### STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

State-level testing in New Jersey is guided by the Core Curriculum Content Standards, which indicate what all New Jersey students should know and be able to do by the end of grades 4, 8, and 11. The state administered the Elementary School Proficiency Assessment (ESPA) in grade 4 from 1997 through 2002, changing its name to the NJ ASK4 in 2003. The Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment (GEPA) began in 1998; and the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) became the state's graduation test for all students who entered the 11th grade as of the fall of 2001. With the advent of *No Child Left Behind*, the state instituted the Grade 3 New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK) in 2004, and now has the NJ ASK for grades 5, 6, and 7 as well. The Newark school district furnished the team 2003-2006 data on students in grade 11 on the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA).

The state's elementary science assessment was first administered to New Jersey's fourth graders in spring 2004, but is not expected to be fully operational until 2007. HSPA science assessments are not fully operational either. Language arts literacy and mathematics assessments at grades 5 through 7 were instituted in 2006. As of the team's site visits, only unofficial preliminary reports were available and were therefore not part of our analysis.

Our analysis of student achievement in the Newark Public Schools has been done from several vantage points—longitudinal results in grades 4, 8, and 11; grade 3 performance on NJ ASK3; Newark's achievement gaps compared with those statewide; Newark's status on both the federal *No Child Left Behind* and the state's accountability systems; and indicators of college preparation.

<sup>7</sup> Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Common Core of Data, "Public Elementary and Secondary School Universe Survey," 2002-2003. Note: Great City School data are current from NCES as of 8/31/06. Data were supplemented from district/state websites.

# Raising Student Achievement in the Newark Public Schools

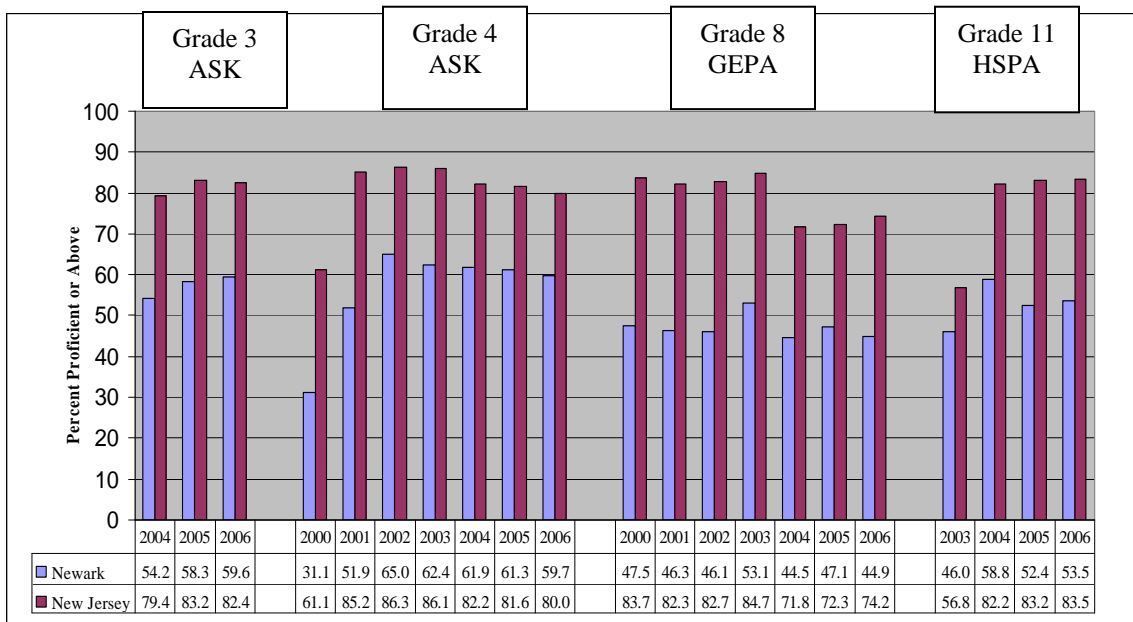
## State Assessment Results

New Jersey administers student assessments in March of each school year, somewhat earlier than other states. The state does this, in part, to return results to its local school systems before the beginning of the subsequent school year. The result, however, may be that students are assessed on material that has yet to be covered. This situation will be the same for students across the state, but the effects may be more detrimental for students in poverty who have no other avenues through which to learn the tested content and are more dependent on their schools to teach them.

The state converts student raw scores or scale scores on the tests into one of three performance bands: partially proficient, proficient, and advanced proficient. The score points needed to be proficient or advanced proficient may vary slightly from year to year depending on the difficulty level of the test.

Results from the spring 2006 testing showed that about 58.6 percent of Newark’s third-graders scored at or above proficiency levels in reading on the language arts literacy (LAL) portion of the NJ ASK, compared with 82.4 percent of third-graders statewide—a gap of 23.8 percentage points. Fourth-graders showed similar patterns. Some 59.7 percent of Newark’s fourth-graders read at or above proficiency levels on the state tests in 2006, compared with 80 percent of fourth-graders statewide—a gap of 20.3 percentage points. At the eighth-grade level on the GEPA, there was a gap of 29.3 percentage points: 44.9 percent of Newark’s eighth-graders scored at or above proficiency levels, compared with 74.2 percent of their peers statewide. And, 53.5 percent of the city’s students scored at or above proficiency levels on the HSPA at the 11th-grade level, compared with 83.5 percent of 11th- graders statewide—a gap of 30 percentage points.

**Graph 1. Newark and New Jersey Test Results: Percent Proficient or Above in Grades 3, 4, 8, and 11 in Language Arts Literacy**

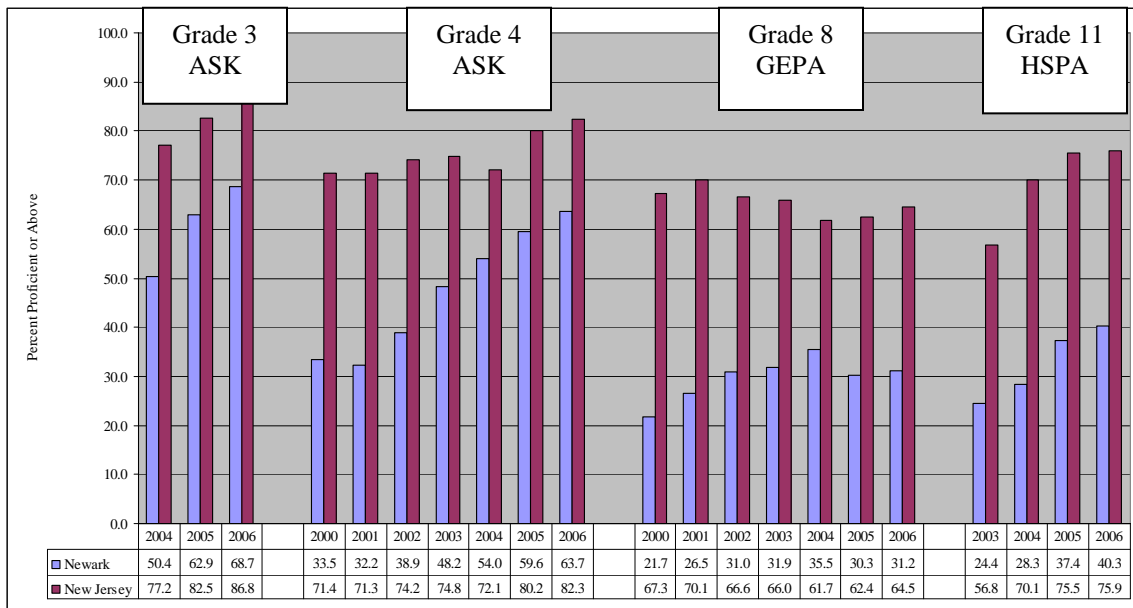




## Raising Student Achievement in the Newark Public Schools

In math, some 68.7 percent of Newark’s third-graders were proficient or higher on the NJ ASK in 2006, compared with 86.8 percent of third-graders statewide—a gap of 18.1 percentage points. At the fourth-grade level, 63.7 percent of the city’s students were proficient or better in math, compared with 82.3 percent of students statewide—a gap of 18.6 percentage points. In the eighth grade, 31.2 percent of Newark’s students scored at or above proficiency levels on the state’s GEPA, compared with 64.5 percent of eighth-graders statewide—a gap of 33.3 percentage points. Finally, some 40.3 percent of Newark’s 11th-graders scored at or above proficiency in math on the state’s HSPA, compared with 75.9 percent of 11th-graders statewide—a gap of 35.6 percentage points. (See Graph 2.)

**Graph 2. Newark and New Jersey Test Results: Percent Proficient or Above in Grades 3, 4, 8, and 11 in Mathematics**



### Trends between 2000 and 2006

While 2006 data indicate that Newark’s students are behind their state peers in every grade tested that year, trend data indicate that city students in some grades are catching up. Between 2000 and 2006, the proportion of Newark fourth-graders reading at or above proficiency on the LAL improved by 28.6 percentage points, compared with a 18.9 percentage-point gain among fourth-graders statewide. Most of the city’s gains came between 2000 and 2002, as did the state’s gains. Since 2002, scores at the state and city levels have leveled off. At the eighth-grade level, the proportion of Newark students at or above proficiency on the LAL dipped by 2.6 percentage points over the same period, while eighth-graders statewide showed a 9.5 percentage-point decline. Finally, at the 11th grade, the proportion of Newark’s students reading at or above proficient on the state’s HSPA improved by 7.5 percentage points between 2003 and 2006, while 11th-graders statewide gained about 26.7 percentage points.

## Raising Student Achievement in the Newark Public Schools

In mathematics, the proportion of Newark's fourth-graders at or above proficiency has increased by 30.2 percentage points between 2000 and 2006, compared with a statewide gain of 10.9 percentage points over the same period. City gains were steady across the entire period. At the eighth-grade level, the proportion of city students at or above proficiency increased by about 9.5 percentage points during the 2000-2006 period, compared with a decline of 2.8 percentage points statewide. However, most of the city's gains, again, came between 2000 and 2002. Finally, at the 11th grade, the proportion of Newark's students scoring at or above proficiency levels in math improved by about 15.9 percentage points between 2003 and 2006, while 11th-graders statewide gained 19.1 percentage points. (See Graph 2.)

In all, Newark reduced the achievement gaps between city and state fourth-graders by 9.7 percentage points (from 30.0 to 20.3) in reading between 2000 and 2006; by 6.9 percentage points (from 36.2 to 29.3) at the eighth-grade level over the same period; but saw an increase in the gaps (from 10.8 to 30.0) at the 11th grade since 2003. (See Table 2.)

The gaps between the city and state in math have also narrowed substantially. In the fourth grade, the gap in the proportion of students scoring at or above proficiency levels has declined by 19.3 percentage points (from 37.9 to 18.6); and in the eighth grade, the gap has dropped by 12.3 percentage points (from 45.6 to 33.3). At the 11th grade, however, the gap has widened by 3.2 percentage points (from 32.4 to 35.6) since 2003. (See Table 2.)

**Table 2. Achievement Gaps between Newark Students and Students Statewide on the NJ ASK, GEPA, and HSPA in Language Arts Literacy and Math, 2000-2006\***

	Grade 4							Grade 8						
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
<b>LAL</b>	30.0	33.3	21.3	23.7	20.3	20.3	20.3	36.2	36.0	36.6	31.6	27.3	25.2	29.3
<b>Math</b>	37.9	39.1	35.3	26.6	18.1	20.6	18.6	45.6	43.6	35.6	34.1	26.2	32.1	33.3
	Grade 11													
<b>LAL</b>				10.8	23.4	30.8	30.0							
<b>Math</b>				32.4	41.8	38.1	35.6							

\*Data stated in percentage points

In summary, the data are clear that the Newark Public Schools has made substantial gains in both reading and mathematics achievement on state tests. Reading gains have slowed appreciably, however, since 2002, while math scores continue to climb. Test results also show that the district has made faster gains than the state at both the fourth- and eighth-grade levels in both reading and math. Eleventh-grade results have shown gains, but the pace of the improvements has not outstripped the state as it has at the fourth- and eighth-grade levels. Large gaps between the city and the state remain in both reading and math at all grades tested despite the overall gains in scores since 2000.

## Raising Student Achievement in the Newark Public Schools

### Racially Identifiable Achievement Gaps

The Council also looked at the district’s achievement results by race and other variables, and examined various performance gaps. Mostly, the results show that African-American and Hispanic students score below their white counterparts in the city and across the state by wide margins.

Some 87.4 percent of Newark’s white students, who comprise less than 10 percent of the school district’s enrollment, scored at or above proficiency levels in reading at the third-grade level in 2006, compared with about 90.1 percent of white students statewide. About the same proportion (82.8 percent) of the city’s white fourth-graders read at proficiency levels as did the third-graders, and some 71.4 percent of white students read at or above proficiency levels in the eighth grade, compared with 85.4 percent of white students statewide. The performance of white students in Newark has increased over the last three years at the third-grade level, but has remained generally steady at the fourth and eighth grades. (See Table 3.)

**Table 3. Disaggregated English Language Arts Scores at or Above Proficient for Newark Students and Students Statewide by Year**

		Newark Public Schools				New Jersey			
		2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	Change	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	Change
Grade									
<b>3rd</b>	White	78.8	83.4	87.4	8.6	88.0	90.7	90.1	2.1
	Black	49.4	53.5	52.8	3.4	61.9	68.2	66.5	4.6
	Hispanic	55.3	59.7	62.0	6.7	64.8	70.3	70.4	5.6
	Asian	NA	78.1	67.5	-10.6	NA	92.5	92.0	-0.5
<b>4th</b>	White	83.3	82.6	82.8	-0.5	89.8	88.6	87.9	-1.9
	Black	58.3	56.2	52.1	-6.2	66.8	65.4	62.9	-3.9
	Hispanic	63.2	64.7	66.5	3.3	69.0	70.8	66.7	-2.3
	Asian	NA	91.7	85.7	-6.0	NA	92.0	91.1	-0.9
<b>8th</b>	White	73.3	72.7	71.4	-1.9	83.2	83.3	85.4	2.2
	Black	38.1	42.4	40.1	2.0	46.4	47.7	50.1	3.7
	Hispanic	48.4	51.0	47.6	-0.8	52.2	54.7	57.3	5.1
	Asian	NA	75.0	63.2	-11.8	NA	85.3	85.4	0.1

White students in Newark were much closer to state averages in math, however, than in reading. Some 93.6 percent of the city’s white third-graders did math at or above proficiency levels in 2006, compared with 92.8 percent of white students statewide. White fourth-graders in Newark, moreover, scored better (92.1 proficient) in math than their white counterparts statewide—89.8 percent. Only 68.6 percent of white students did math at proficiency levels in Newark in the eighth grade, compared with 77.9 percent of white students statewide. The math performance of white students in Newark and statewide has increased by small margins over the last three years. (See Table 4.)

## Raising Student Achievement in the Newark Public Schools

**Table 4. Disaggregated Math Scores at or Above Proficient for Newark Students and Students Statewide by Year**

		Newark Public Schools				New Jersey			
		2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	Change	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	Change
<i>Grade</i>									
3rd	White	83.2	87.4	93.6	10.4	86.2	89.4	92.8	6.6
	Black	43.4	57.2	62.7	19.3	54.0	66.3	72.5	18.5
	Hispanic	52.9	65.9	72.3	19.4	63.5	72.2	78.9	15.4
	Asian	NA	60.6	84.7	24.1	NA	93.0	95.6	2.6
4th	White	86.0	88.2	92.1	6.1	81.1	88.0	89.8	8.7
	Black	46.5	53.0	55.3	8.8	50.2	60.4	63.4	13.2
	Hispanic	59.3	62.9	70.3	11.0	59.3	70.0	72.3	13.0
	Asian	NA	83.3	82.2	-1.1	NA	92.3	93.7	1.4
8th	White	67.8	65.3	68.6	0.8	74.2	75.4	77.9	3.7
	Black	26.5	21.9	22.7	-3.8	30.2	30.3	31.7	1.5
	Hispanic	43.4	38.4	37.5	-5.9	42.4	42.6	45.5	3.1
	Asian	NA	76.4	70.0	-6.4	NA	83.8	85.6	1.8

Some 52.8 percent of third-grade African-American students, who make up about 59 percent of the district's students, read at or above proficiency levels in 2006, compared with 66.5 percent of African-American students statewide. A similar proportion of African-American students in Newark (52.1 percent) scored at or above proficiency levels in reading in the fourth grade, compared with 62.9 percent of African-Americans statewide. At the eighth-grade level, however, a far lower proportion of African-American students scored at this level than did their third- or fourth-grade peers—40.1 percent. This lower performance of eighth-grade African-Americans was mirrored at the state level, where only 50.1 percent read at or above proficiency levels. (See Table 3.)

In math, the performance levels of African-American students were similar to those seen in reading. Some 62.7 percent of African-American third-graders in Newark did math at or above proficiency levels in 2006, compared with about 72.5 percent of African-American third-graders statewide. Some 55.3 percent of Newark's African-American fourth-graders scored at this level in 2006, compared with 63.4 percent statewide. And 22.7 percent of African-American eighth-graders scored at or above proficiency levels in math, compared with 31.7 percent statewide. (See Table 4.)

Hispanic students, on the other hand, make up about 32 percent of Newark's enrollment and generally score between whites and African-American students—but closer to the African-American students. Some 62.0 percent of Hispanic third-graders read at or above proficiency levels on the state test, compared with 70.4 percent among

## Raising Student Achievement in the Newark Public Schools

their Hispanic counterparts statewide. Some 66.5 percent of Hispanic fourth-graders also read at or above proficiency levels, as did 66.7 percent of Hispanic fourth-graders statewide. And 47.6 percent of Hispanic eighth-graders read at this level, compared with 57.3 percent of Hispanic eighth-graders statewide. (See Table 3.)

In math, 72.3 percent of Newark's Hispanic third-graders performed at or above proficiency levels on the state tests in 2006. About 78.9 percent of all Hispanic third-graders did math at this level statewide. In addition, 70.3 percent of Newark's Hispanic fourth-graders scored at or above proficiency on their state math tests, compared with 72.3 percent of their racial counterparts statewide. And 37.5 percent of the city's Hispanic eighth-graders scored at or above proficiency in math, compared with 45.5 percent of Hispanic eighth-graders statewide. (See Table 4.)

The differences in performance from group to group result in significant achievement gaps. In reading in 2006, a 34.6 percentage-point gap in proficiency exists between Newark's white and African-American third-graders. Statewide, this gap between whites and blacks is 23.6 percentage points. At the fourth grade in reading, the gap between whites and African-Americans is 30.7 percentage points in Newark and 25.0 percentage points statewide. And in eighth grade, the gap is 31.3 percentage points in Newark and 35.3 percentage points statewide. (See Table 5.)

**Table 5. Language Arts Literacy Achievement Gap between Newark Students and Students Statewide by Ethnicity for Grades 3, 4, and 8 by Year**

Comparison Groups and Grade Levels	Newark 2003-2004	Newark 2004-2005	Newark 2005-2006	Newark Change in Gap	State 2003-2004	State 2004-2005	State 2005-2006	State Change in Gap
<i>White-African American Gap</i>								
3rd	29.4	29.9	34.6	5.2	26.1	22.5	23.6	-2.5
4th	25.0	26.4	30.7	5.7	23.0	23.2	25.0	2.0
8th	35.2	30.3	31.3	-3.9	36.8	35.6	35.3	-1.5
<i>White-Hispanic Gap</i>								
3rd	23.5	23.7	25.4	1.9	23.2	20.4	19.7	-3.5
4th	20.1	17.9	16.3	-3.8	20.8	17.8	21.2	0.4
8th	24.9	21.7	23.8	-1.1	31.0	28.6	28.1	-2.9
<i>White-Asian Gap</i>								
3rd	NA	5.3	19.9	14.6	NA	-1.8	-1.9	-0.1
4th	NA	-9.1	-2.9	6.2	NA	-3.4	-3.2	0.2
8th	NA	-2.3	8.2	10.5	NA	-2.0	0.0	-2.0

In math in 2006, the gap between whites and African-American third-graders was 30.9 percentage points in Newark and 20.3 percentage points statewide. At the fourth-grade level, the math gap was 36.8 percentage points in Newark and 26.4 percentage points statewide. And in the eighth grade, the gap was 45.9 percentage points between white and African-American students in Newark and 46.2 percentage points statewide. (See Table 6.)

## Raising Student Achievement in the Newark Public Schools

**Table 6. Mathematics Achievement Gap between Newark Students and Students Statewide by Ethnicity for Grades 3, 4, and 8 by Year**

Comparison Groups and Grade Levels	Newark 2003-2004	Newark 2004-2005	Newark 2005-2006	Newark Change in Gap	State 2003-2004	State 2004-2005	State 2005-2006	State Change in Gap
<b>White-African American Gap</b>								
3rd	39.8	30.2	30.9	-8.9	32.2	23.1	20.3	-11.9
4th	39.5	35.2	36.8	-2.7	30.9	27.6	26.4	-4.5
8th	41.3	43.4	45.9	4.6	44.0	45.1	46.2	2.2
<b>White-Hispanic Gap</b>								
3rd	30.3	21.5	21.3	-9.0	22.7	17.2	13.9	-8.8
4th	26.7	25.3	21.8	-4.9	21.8	18.0	17.5	-4.3
8th	24.4	26.9	31.1	6.7	31.8	32.8	32.4	0.6
<b>White-Asian Gap</b>								
3rd	NA	26.8	8.9	-17.9	NA	-3.6	-2.8	-0.8
4th	NA	4.9	9.9	5.0	NA	-4.3	-3.9	0.4
8th	NA	-11.1	-1.4	9.7	NA	-8.4	-7.7	0.7

The white-Hispanic achievement gaps are somewhat smaller than the white-black gaps. In the third grade in 2006, the achievement gap in reading between Newark's white and Hispanic was 25.4 percentage points. The disparity was generally the same statewide (19.7 percent). At the fourth-grade level, the reading gap was 16.3 percentage points in Newark and 21.2 percentage points statewide. And in the eighth grade, the reading gap was 23.8 percentage points in Newark and 28.1 percentage points statewide. (Table 5.)

In math, the white-Hispanic achievement gap was 21.3 percentage points at the third-grade level in Newark and about 13.9 percentage points statewide. Fourth-graders saw a white-Hispanic gap of 21.8 percentage points in Newark and 17.5 percentage points statewide. And the gap between the groups was 31.1 percentage points among eighth-graders in Newark, compared with a gap of 32.4 percentage points statewide. (Table 6.)

In summary, there are significant achievement gaps between various racial groups in Newark but the gaps, in general, are similar to those seen statewide. The data also suggest that the district has a mixed record in narrowing these gaps at rates faster than the state as a whole.

### Advanced Placement and Honors Courses

According to Newark's August 2006 *High School Resource Guide*, all city public high schools offer advanced placement (AP) or honors courses. Page 35 lists the AP course offerings by school. American History is not listed,<sup>8</sup> although AP English Literature is offered at every high school listed. Central High School appears to offer only one AP course, while most high schools in the city are listed as providing three or

<sup>8</sup> American History High, however, opened in 2006-07 with an initial class of 80 ninth graders.

## Raising Student Achievement in the Newark Public Schools

four. Two magnet high schools, Science and University, offer the largest number of AP opportunities (nine and eight courses, respectively).

The Strategic Support Team also examined Advanced Placement (AP) scores to determine the number of students tested and the number of students scoring a 3 or better. According to data furnished by the district, Newark's students took AP exams in 10 subjects in 2006. AP Literature was the most popular, with 145 students taking this exam that year. The second most popular AP exam was Composition, with 124 students participating. The least popular AP exams were World History and Statistics. No AP Physics exams were taken. (See Table 7.)

**Table 7. Newark Public Schools Advanced Placement Exams and Results, 2006**

AP Exam Title	Number of Students Taking in 2006	Number of Total Students Receiving a 3 or better
Literature	145	12
Composition	124	10
Calculus	59	12
Computer Science	16	8
Statistics	11	0
Biology	16	0
Chemistry	32	0
United States History	108	4
World History	3	2
Spanish	19	18
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>533</b>	<b>66</b>

The data also indicate that the number of students scoring 3 or better on these exams was low.<sup>9</sup> Of the 533 students taking an AP exam, only 66 (12.4 percent) attained a score of 3 or higher. AP courses in Spanish, World History, and Computer Sciences yielded the greatest percentage of scores of 3 or better. None of the tests taken in biology, chemistry, or statistics yielded a college credit-level score.

AP exam data were also disaggregated by race. White students in the city took 34 (6.4 percent) of the AP tests, and 16 of their tests were scored a 3 or above. African-American students took 317 (59.5 percent) of the AP exams in Newark, and 11 of their

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<sup>9</sup> A score of 3 or better is typically given college credit in the particular course.

## Raising Student Achievement in the Newark Public Schools

tests scored a 3 or better. Hispanic students took 136 (25.5 percent) of the AP exams in 2006 and 32 of their tests attained a score of 3 or better. (See Table 8.)

**Table 8. Newark Advanced Placement Exam Results by Ethnicity, 2006**

	White	African-American	Hispanic	Other	Total
Number of AP tests taken	34	317	136	46	533
Number of AP tests with a score of 3 or above	16	11	32	7	66

## Graduation and Dropout Rates

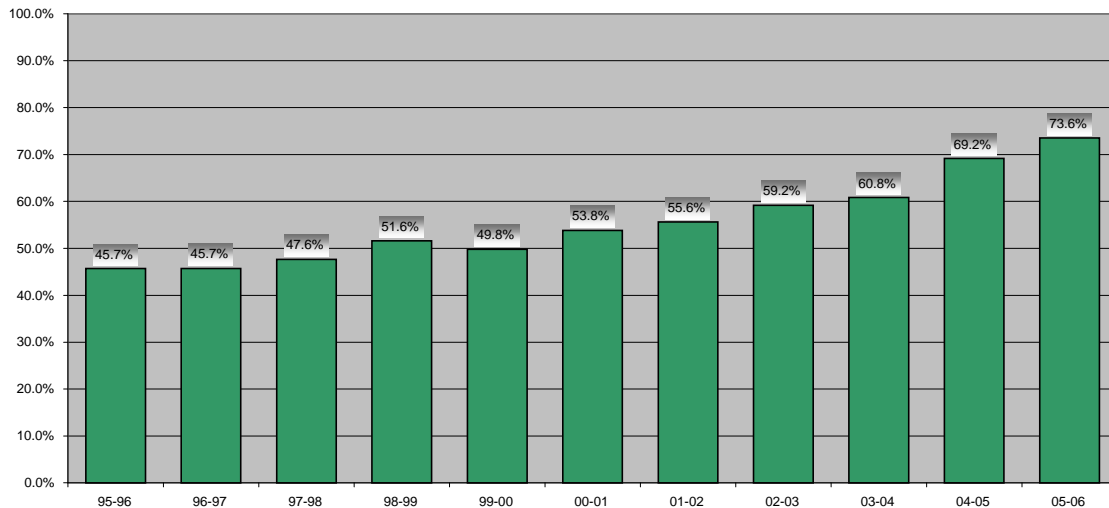
Finally, the Council requested graduation and dropout data from the district. New Jersey computes its dropout rates using students 16 years of age or older in grades 7-12. The district's state-computed dropout rate fell from 9.07 percent in 1999-2000 to 3.11 percent in 2005-2006. (See Table 9.)

**Table 9. Newark Public School Dropout Rates for 1999-2000 through 2005-2006**

Year	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006
Dropout Rate	9.07	8.74	6.02	4.00	4.44	4.32	3.11

Conversely, the district's graduation rates are calculated by the state by dividing the number of graduates by the number of freshman. The district's state-computed graduation rates have increased from 60.8 percent in 2003-2004 to 73.6 percent in 2005-2006. (See Graph 3.)

**Graph 3. Ten-Year Longitudinal Comparison of Graduation Rates (1996-2006)**



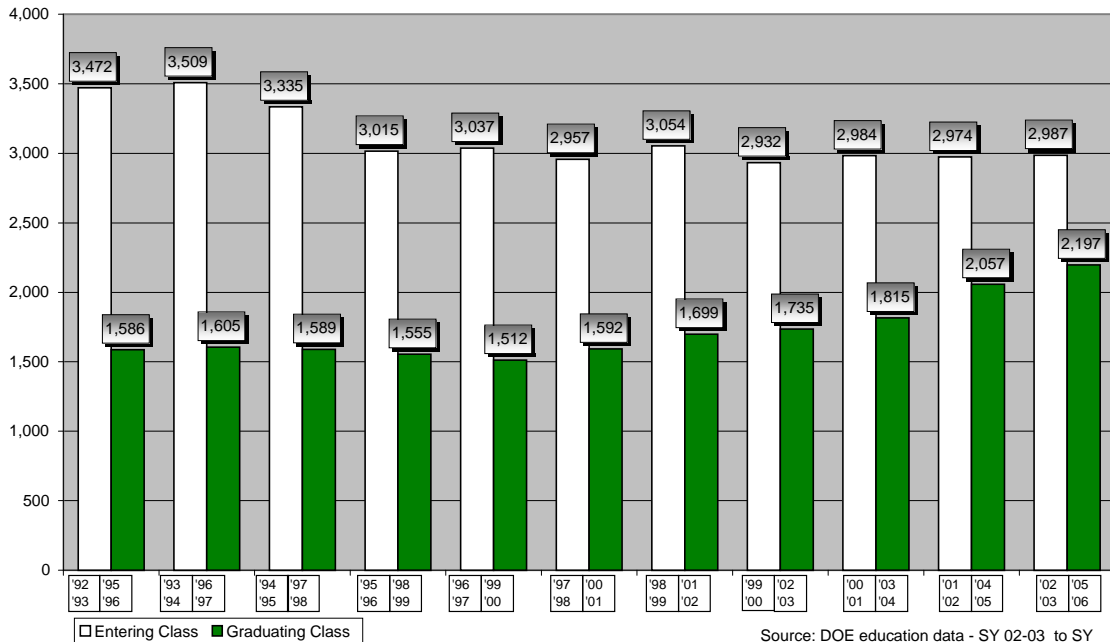


## Raising Student Achievement in the Newark Public Schools

Graph 4 shows the number of graduates in the Newark Public Schools and the size of the corresponding ninth-grade class four years earlier. The data indicate that the district has graduated an increasing number of students between 1999-2000 and 2005-2006, even though the size of the entering ninth-grade class remained stable at about 2,900 students between 1996-1997 and 2002-2003.

**Graph 4. Newark Public School Graduates (1996-2006)**

The chart below shows the total number of freshmen entering the NPS each year from 1992 to 2002 and the total number of graduates four years later.



## College Entrance Examination Scores (SAT)

The Council also looked at scores on the district's most frequently taken college entrance exam, the SAT. According to data that the Newark school system provided the Council's team, some 1,187 students took the SAT in 2006. This was the third year that the Newark Public Schools has seen an increase in its SAT test-taking rate.

The SAT changed its structure in March 2005, so the team looked only at scores for 2005 and 2006. Between 2005 and 2006, scores on the SAT statewide declined from 1020 points to 1011—or nine points—on the combined verbal and math tests. The Newark school district's scores, however, remained the same. The district's combined verbal and math score of 764 was 247 points below the average state total. (See Table 10.)

Finally, about 6,300 students in the district took the PSAT in 2005, some 2,850 of whom were seventh- and eighth-graders. Only about 4.5 percent of Newark's PSAT test takers scored above the statewide average in 2005.

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**Table 10. Comparison of Numbers of Newark Public School and New Jersey Students Taking the SAT and Their Average Scores, 2002-2006\***

<b>Critical Reading Mean Scores</b>									
	<b>N 2004</b>	<b>N 2005</b>	<b>N 2006</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2005-06 Growth</b>
Newark	1,053	1,128	1,187	387	383	381	375	374	-1
NJ	77,634	81,761		498	501	501	503	496	-7
<b>Mathematics Mean Scores</b>									
Newark	1,053	1,128	1,187	400	393	392	389	390	1
NJ	77,634	81,761		513	515	502	517	515	-2
<b>Combined Verbal (2) and Math Mean Scores</b>									
Newark						773	764	764	0
NJ						1003	1020	1011	-9

\* There was a nationwide decline of about 7 points both in Math and Verbal (now called Critical Reading).

The team also disaggregated the SAT scores of both Newark and the state of New Jersey. The results show that the reading and math scores of each racial group in the Newark school system are lower than their same-race counterparts statewide. The mean verbal score of white test takers in Newark was 441 in 2006. The mean verbal score of the city's African-American test takers was 377. And the mean verbal score among Newark's Hispanic test takers was 397. Among the city's test takers, the mean math score for white students in 2006 was 471; for African-American students, it was 391; and for Hispanic students, it was 431. (See Table 11.)

**Table 11. Comparison of Newark Public School and Statewide Disaggregated Student Average Scores on the SAT, 2006\***

	<b>Number of Students</b>		<b>Mean Verbal Score</b>		<b>Mean Math Score</b>		<b>Combined</b>	
	<b>NPS</b>	<b>NJ</b>	<b>NPS</b>	<b>NJ</b>	<b>NPS</b>	<b>NJ</b>	<b>NPS</b>	<b>NJ</b>
<b>2006</b>								
White	143	47,109	441	517	471	534	912	1051
African-American	1,038	8,619	377	421	391	423	768	844
Hispanic	345	8,114	397	443	431	456	828	899
Other	62	19,1148	402	502	429	534	831	1036
<b>TOTAL</b>	1,588	82,990	388	496	408	515	796	1011

## Raising Student Achievement in the Newark Public Schools

### DISTRICT ACCOUNTABILITY

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in New Jersey is based on student assessment results in clusters of grade levels: elementary grades 3, 4, and 5; middle school grades 6, 7, and 8; and high school grade 11. Schools meet AYP goals in language arts literacy (reading/writing) if at least 75 percent of their students are at or above proficiency levels in the elementary grades; 66 percent of their students attain proficiency in the middle grades; and 79 percent meet proficiency at the high school level. Schools meet AYP requirements in mathematics if at least 62 percent of their students attain proficiency or above in the elementary grades; 49 percent attain proficiency in the middle schools; and 64 percent meet proficiency levels in high school. (See Table 12.)

According to final data furnished by the state to the Newark school district for 2006-07, 60 schools were classified as being in one form of school improvement status or another under the federal *No Child Left Behind* act. Nine of Newark's schools were in Year 1 of school improvement; nine were in Year 2 of sanction; 13 were in Year 3; 14 were in Year 4; eight were in Year 5; and seven were in Year 6. Twenty schools were on "hold" for making AYP for one year, meaning they could be out of sanction if they make AYP for an additional year. Some 26 elementary schools were in school improvement status under *No Child Left Behind* for inadequate performance in language arts literacy and 12 elementary schools were in sanction because of weak math performance. In addition, 26 middle schools were in sanction because of poor performance in language arts literacy and 16 middle schools were in sanction because of inadequate math performance. Finally, seven high schools are in school improvement because of inadequate achievement in both language arts literacy and mathematics.

**Table 12. Number of Newark Schools in School Improvement Status in 2006-2007<sup>10</sup>**

Level	Year 1	Hold	Year 2	Hold	Year 3	Hold	Year 4	Hold	Year 5	Hold	Year 6
Elem.	-	2	3	3	1	3	1	-	1	-	
Elem-Middle	3	2	2	1	5	2	7	-	2	3	6
Middle	-	-	-	-	1	-		-	-	3	1
Middle-High	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
High	1	1	-	-	-	1	5	-	-	-	-
Totals	4	5	5	4	7	6	14	-	3	5	7

### DISTRICT STAFFING

The Newark public schools employed about 6,350 full-time equivalent staff members, in 2004-2005, the most recent year for which nationally comparative data are available. The Council of the Great City Schools looked at the staffing levels in Newark and compared them with other major urban school systems across the country.

<sup>10</sup> Source: Preliminary School Improvement Status Summary (SY 06/07).

## Raising Student Achievement in the Newark Public Schools

Table 13 presents National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) staffing data for Newark and other Council-member urban school districts in 2004-2005. The data show that Newark's school system has more staff members (1 staff member for every six students) than does the average Great City School district, which has about one staff member for every nine students. In addition, the Newark Public Schools has more teachers, instructional aides, instructional coordinators, administrators, librarians, and counselors than do other major city school districts.

**Table 13. Newark School Staffing Levels per Pupil in Newark and the Great City Schools, 2004-2005<sup>11</sup>**

	Newark	Urban Average
Total Staff	6	9
Teachers	10	17
Instructional Aides	49	81
Instructional Coordinators	264	852
District Administrators/Support	151	230
Library, Media Spec/Support	619	786
School Administrator/ Support	91	114
Guidance Counselors	363	434

### DISTRICT SPENDING

The Newark schools have benefited from the historic Abbott decision in New Jersey. The case requires the state to provide extra resources to students in the poorest communities in the state in order to provide those students with support approximating wealthier school systems.

The Council of the Great City Schools looked at the pattern of the school district's expenditures, compared with other major urban school systems across the country. This comparison was made based on surveys of Council member-districts on their 2004-2005 budgeted (not actual) spending patterns on major school system functions. (Table 14.)

The results of the survey indicate that Newark spends more per pupil than other urban school systems across the country.<sup>12</sup> The district spent more per child in each function than did the average urban school district. However, the Newark school system appeared to devote a smaller share of its total dollars to direct classroom instruction, school board activities, business services, and school-site support than did the average big-city school district.

Conversely, the district devoted a greater share of its dollars to special education, curriculum and staff development, health and attendance services, transportation, and maintenance and facilities than the average big-city school district.

<sup>11</sup> Source: National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education.

<sup>12</sup> Numbers are not regionally adjusted for differences in the cost of living.

## Raising Student Achievement in the Newark Public Schools

**Table 14. Spending per Pupil in Newark and the Great City Schools, 2004-2005<sup>13</sup>**

Budget Category	Urban Average	Percent of Current	Newark Average	Percent of Current
Total Current Expenditures	\$8,885	100.0	\$18,124	100.0
Instructional Expenditures				
• Classroom Instruction	3,764	42.4	5,411	29.9
• Special Education	1,136	12.8	3,889	21.5
• Books & Materials	213	2.4	378	2.1
• Instructional Technology	43	0.5	11	0.1
• Auxiliary Instructional Services	353	4.0	785	4.3
• Curriculum & Staff Development	284	3.2	888	4.9
• Other Instructional Expenditures	168	1.9	511	2.8
Subtotal	\$5,961	67.4	\$11,873	65.5
Student Services				
• Health & Attendance	186	2.1	563	3.1
• Transportation	340	3.8	833	4.6
• Food Services (net costs)	62	0.7	195	1.1
• Student Activities (net costs)	24	0.3	44	0.2
• Other Student Services	29	0.3	14	0.1
Subtotal	\$641	7.3	\$1,649	9.1
Central & Regional Services				
• Board of Education	28	0.3	11	0.1
• Executive Administration	167	1.9	358	2.0
Subtotal	\$195	2.1	\$369	2.0
Operations				
• Fiscal Services	73	0.8	474	2.6
• Business Services	209	2.3	67	0.4
• Maintenance & Facilities	596	6.7	2,222	12.3
• Energy & Utilities	192	2.2	262	1.4
• Insurance	72	0.8	166	0.9
Subtotal	\$1,142	12.9	\$3,191	17.6
School-Site				
• Leadership	378	4.3	817	4.5
• Support	202	2.3	225	1.2
Subtotal	\$580	6.5	\$1,042	5.7
Other				
• Other Current Expenditures	\$367	4.1	0	0.0

<sup>13</sup> Source: Council of the Great City Schools. Figures reflect budgeted, not actual, amounts.

## Raising Student Achievement in the Newark Public Schools

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This overview of characteristics of the Newark Public Schools indicates that the school system, the largest in New Jersey and one of the largest in the nation, has a student population that faces substantially greater challenges than those of the average school system. In fact, students in the city's schools are more likely to be eligible for a free or reduced price lunch, even when compared with other major urban school systems across the nation.

The state of New Jersey has sought to overcome the barriers that poverty presents to the Newark schools by providing additional resources through the Abbott decision and naming a strong superintendent to lead the district's reforms. Over the years, the superintendent has put into place a substantial number of important reforms and has seen significant gains in student achievement. These academic gains appear to have slowed in recent years, however, particularly in reading. The district now finds itself in a series of sanctions under the federal *No Child Left Behind* statute, and faces increasing community pressure to accelerate reforms and to restart the academic progress.

In addition, the data reviewed in this chapter make clear that the city's secondary schools are in substantial need of academic overhaul, despite the progress the district has seen in the number of graduates each year. The average graduate of the district does not graduate with the requisite skills to be admitted to a competitive college or university. In fact, only 626 students out of 2,099 graduating in 2006 went on to a four-year college or university, although an additional 840 went on to a two-year college.

The next chapter of this report is devoted to describing the findings of the team and the recommendations it makes to accelerate student achievement in the district.

### Chapter 2. Curriculum and Instruction

This chapter summarizes the findings of the Council’s Strategic Support Team and its proposals to the Newark Public Schools. These observations and recommendations were designed to address two critical questions: “Why have the gains in Newark’s student achievement slowed over the last several years?” and “What does the district need to do to accelerate student performance in the future?”

The Council team did not examine every possible document or review every program that the district has in order to answer these questions. Instead, the team focused its inquiry on the systemic levers that research is showing are instrumental in improving academic achievement in urban school districts

Research conducted by the Council over the last several years has found that urban school districts that have improved significantly often share a number of common characteristics that set them apart from urban school systems that have not shown much progress.<sup>14</sup> This chapter organizes the Strategic Support Team’s findings and suggested next steps around 10 key aspects of these significantly improving urban school systems: political preconditions, goals, accountability, curriculum and instruction, professional development and teacher quality, reform press (or the ability to get reforms into the classrooms), assessment and use of data, and strategies targeting lowest-performing students and schools, early childhood education and elementary schools, and secondary schools.

#### FINDINGS AND NEXT STEPS

The team assembled by the Council of the Great City Schools devoted most of its attention to Newark’s reading and math programs, rather than to social studies, the sciences, and other content areas. It found that—

#### HIGHLIGHTS

- ★ A skilled and seasoned superintendent with strong academic skills and deep community roots leads the Newark Public Schools.
- ★ The district faces the potential of declining state funding and the reality of dropping enrollments.
- ★ Student achievement scores on state tests in reading increased substantially until 2002, when they began to level off. Math achievement scores continue to increase.

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<sup>14</sup> Snipes, J., Doolittle, F., Herlihy, C. (2002). *Foundations for Success: Case Studies of How Urban School Systems Improve Student Achievement*. MDRC for the Council of the Great City Schools.

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- ★ Evidence shows that the district’s curriculum lacks deep alignment with the state’s standards in both reading and math.
- ★ The district has invested in well-regarded literacy and mathematics programs and has collaborated with other districts to develop quarterly tests to measure student progress throughout the school year.
- ★ The district provides literacy coaches for every elementary and middle school and mathematics coaches in schools that are in years five and six of “school improvement” status to support instructional initiatives and improve teaching and learning.
- ★ The district provides a substantial amount of professional development but lacks a mechanism for tracking who participates in it or for evaluating its effectiveness.
- ★ Implementation of the district’s curriculum and programs is irregular. Principals monitor classroom instruction, but not the implementation of the curriculum.
- ★ The superintendent and staff have worked hard over the years to boost expectations for student achievement, but classroom instruction still reflects inadequate expectations and poor rigor in student work.

### A. POLITICAL PRECONDITIONS

Urban school districts that have improved significantly have a number of common characteristics. These commonalities also set them apart from urban school systems that have not seen significant improvements. One key indicator of an effective urban school district is the political unity of the school board, its focus on student achievement, and its ability to work with the district administration to improve academic performance. Another is the support of the community and the readiness of staff to focus systematically on the most effective strategies to accomplish the board’s student achievement goals.

### Positive Findings

- The overarching vision statement of the district says—

*The Newark Public Schools recognize that each child is a unique individual possessing talents, abilities, goals and dreams. We further recognize that each child can only be successful when we acknowledge all aspects of that child’s life, addressing needs, enhancing the intellect, developing character, and uplifting the spirit. Finally, we recognize that individuals learn, grow and achieve differently, and it is, therefore, critical that, as a district, we provide a diversity of programs based on student needs.*

*As a district we recognize that education does not exist in a vacuum. In recognizing the rich diversity of our student population, we also acknowledge the richness of the diverse environment that surrounds us. The numerous cultural, educational and economic institutions that are part of the greater Newark community play a critical role in the lives of our children. It is equally essential that these institutions become an integral part of our educational program.*



## Raising Student Achievement in the Newark Public Schools

*To this end, the Newark Public Schools is dedicated to providing a quality education, embodying a philosophy of critical and creative thinking and designed to equip each graduate with the knowledge and skills needed to be a productive citizen. Our educational program is informed by high academic standards, high expectations, and equal access to programs that provide and motivate a variety of interests and abilities for every student based on his or her interests. Accountability at every level is an integral part of our approach. As a result of the conscientious, committed, and coordinated efforts of staff, parents, and the community, **All Children Will Learn.***

- The Newark community appears to be in strong support of its schools and its superintendent, but is eager for faster improvement.
- The mayor has a strong commitment to improving the public schools in the city, and while he has expressed a somewhat different set of educational priorities, he has a generally positive working relationship with the schools administration and school board.
- The school board and the superintendent mostly share the same agenda for improving the schools and are pursuing the same overarching strategies.
- School board meeting agendas reflect some time devoted to instructional issues and services at each of its meetings, rather than just operational and political issues.
- In general, the school district has strong central office staff members, who are capable of producing and managing faster academic gains.
- The district has the financial, personnel, and programmatic resources to improve student achievement at a faster pace. The quality of many of the staff at the central office level and at the schools is high.
- The district receives funding under the Abbott decision that equalizes its per-student general-education budget with the most successful suburban school districts in the state, including preschool services, school facilities, and other programs and services.<sup>15</sup>
- In general, the school district's leadership and its teachers' union enjoy constructive relations, with both focused on improving academic results.
- The district has a number of strong partnerships with local universities, community groups, corporations and companies, clubs, museums, and other groups.

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<sup>15</sup> Analyses by the Education Law Center indicate that Abbott districts have made progress in closing reading and math achievement gaps with non-Abbott school districts. Source: *The Abbott Districts in 200506: Progress and Challenges*, Abbott Indicators Project, Education Law Center, Spring 2006; and *Newark, New Jersey, Tracking Progress-Engaging Communities*, Abbott Indicators Summary Project, Education Law Center, 2005.

## **Raising Student Achievement in the Newark Public Schools**

- The district has an Office of Community Relations that receives and handles parent complaints and concerns. Each School Leadership Team (SLT) has five parent coordinators and each school has a parent liaison who helps with parent and community outreach.

### **Areas of Concern**

- The sense of urgency for improving student achievement is not shared uniformly across the school district. This lack of urgency in some quarters can be seen in the low expectations that some staff members have of student capabilities and in the minimal requirements needed to meet the *No Child Left Behind* act's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals.
- The city's mayor and the school district administration are trying to work together constructively, but more collaboration and consensus on the direction, nature, and speed of the school system's reforms are needed.
- Charter schools have begun affecting the school district's enrollment, and calls for vouchers and other choice options have been intensifying across the city.
- The district has started to face budget cutbacks and, consequently, recently has had to close two schools.
- The administration's instructional reports to the school board often lack the detailed analysis necessary to help the board understand the district's instructional challenges and strategies.
- The district's aspirations to build a strong program of parent communications have shown substantial progress over the last several years, but more is clearly needed. The district's Office of Community Relations has produced a considerable number of documents, boosted its efforts to engage parents, and provided more funding for area offices to focus on parent needs. Still, parents interviewed by the team reported the school district's communications to them were often spotty, untimely, and erroneous.

### **Recommendations**

Urban districts that have made significant improvements in student performance have school boards, administrators, and city leaders that make student achievement their first priority. These cities have a vision for their school districts defined around higher academic performance and work closely with the superintendent to transform that vision into a coherent theory of action, strategies, and goals. These cities and their school systems also work jointly to build buy-in from their communities on the nature and direction of their reforms. As the Newark Public Schools takes the next steps in its own reforms and improvement, it might—

## **Raising Student Achievement in the Newark Public Schools**

1. *Encourage the superintendent and school board, in collaboration with the mayor, if possible, to breathe a fresh sense of urgency into the next steps of the school district's reforms and improvements.*

Newark has a relatively new mayor, a new school board, and a very seasoned school superintendent. The fact that these key players arrived at their positions at somewhat different times and under varying circumstances suggests that they may not all see the school district and its reforms in the same way. The Council's analysis of the Newark Public Schools and its performance suggests that there is a fresh need for city and school leaders to work in tandem to galvanize the community around a unified set of strategies for improving student achievement in the city schools. Each of these constituent groups will not be able to do this alone. In addition, the research is quite clear that governing and organizational changes hold little promise of raising children's achievement.

The Council is urging that city and school leaders form a new alliance around an agreed-upon strategy for raising student achievement, and work with the community in articulating and pursuing it. We think that this step would help unify—rather than split—the city and give the school system's reforms additional momentum and energy as the district looks to the future. It would also allow the city to take advantage of energetic new leadership, but leaven it with experience and solid research, while building on what the superintendent has already accomplished.

2. *Enhance communications with and outreach to the community around district progress and next steps in its reforms. Consider establishing a school system ombudsman to receive and resolve parent concerns, and soliciting information from parents about how and when to communicate with them more effectively.*

A number of schools that the team visited had space reserved for parents to meet. The team also saw parents in the schools during the site visits. The district provides a variety of ways for parents to interact with school staff, including District Parent Advisory Councils, parent leadership forums, parent/teacher conferences, and grandparent outreach. The district also provides information on cable television and in newsletters. But, these many efforts have not satisfied all parents. Parents interviewed by the team reported that communication from the district and the schools was often weak. Charter and voucher proponents are also playing off these complaints to advocate that parents leave the traditional schools. The Council recommends that the district become more proactive in its outreach to parents and set up an ombudsman to receive and handle parent complaints. The school district might also consider holding a fresh round of community forums to hear parent concerns, incorporate customer-service components into school-based professional development, step up mailings and flyers to parents about school events, and consider a staff home-visit program. Staff might consider developing a process for seeing how well the district's many parent programs are actually meeting parent and community information needs. Staff might also investigate how many parents are aware of and take advantage of the various programs available to them.

## Raising Student Achievement in the Newark Public Schools

3. *Marshal influential community advocates to speak up more aggressively about the school district's progress and next steps in the reform and improvement process. Encourage community leaders to help build higher parent and student expectations for student achievement.*

The superintendent has worked very hard over the last 10 years to raise expectations for student performance among school staff and in the community. The city's children remain the victims of very low expectations for what Newark students can do or can be. This situation reflects the legacy of past and present racial discrimination and poverty that have sapped the community of the tools to prepare its children for the rigors of high-level academic work. The practical dimensions of this legacy are found in the limited vocabulary that city children have entering school, compared with the vocabulary of their wealthier counterparts—and the lower expectations that adults often hold of the capabilities of city students to learn at high levels. The job of the school system, of course, is to overcome these barriers, but it needs help from the community to do so. A communitywide campaign to raise expectations for doing homework, going to the public library, reading books, turning off the television, and getting adequate rest might help support the schools' efforts.

### B. GOALS

Urban school systems that have seen significant gains in student achievement often have a clear sense of where they are going. This clarity is exhibited not only in the consensus of the leadership about the system's direction, but also in how leaders have translated that broad vision into explicit academic goals that are set for both the whole school district and for its individual schools. These goals are realistic, but they also stretch the system and its performance beyond its current comfort levels. Finally, goals are measurable and accompanied by specific timelines for when targets are to be met.

### Positive Findings

- The district's overarching goals include the following—

*To improve student achievement by providing all students with equal access to opportunities that demonstrate high academic standards and high expectations.*

*To equip students to be productive citizens through the development of student moral and social responsibility.*

*To involve the community—parents, grandparents, foster parents, guardians, clergy, elected officials, corporations, small businesses and charitable organizations—in meaningful decision-making and planning for Newark children by enfranchising the community and empowering parents.*

*To structure an efficient, effective organization that allocates and aligns resources on the basis of student need with high achievement as the ultimate goal.*

- *The District Whole-School Reform Plan, which serves as the district's strategic plan, includes overarching goals for teacher engagement in standards-based*

## Raising Student Achievement in the Newark Public Schools

instruction, reading at the third-grade level, and student mastery of education standards.

- The *Two-Year Report on Instruction Priorities* contains departmental priorities, many of which have concrete goals.
- Various district instructional offices and departments have action plans with concrete, measurable goals.
- Schools have concrete and measurable goals for improving student achievement. The testing department annually provides every school with explicit student performance goals by subgroup designed to meet AYP. In addition, schools receive “challenge goals” for at least one language arts literacy and one mathematics area that are set at 10 percent higher than the minimum progress needed for AYP.
- Schools provide quarterly status reports on goal attainment for assistant superintendents to review.

### Areas of Concern

- The district has explicit goals for improving systemwide student achievement that are tied to *No Child Left Behind* targets. In addition, the district and schools appear to rely extensively on “safe harbor” goals in the school improvement plans.
- The district does not appear to have an explicit goal for reducing its dropout rate, although that rate appears to be declining in recent years.
- The district does not appear to have concrete goals for improving AP course participation, strengthening secondary school course-taking patterns, or increasing college-prep course participation in its school improvement plans. However, Assistant Superintendents and principal evaluations include a goal for increasing the number of students taking and passing AP exams and for increasing SAT participation rate and scores.
- The district’s 2005-2006 action plans do not describe any benchmarks by which the district could assess whether any of its action steps had been successful. Each department in the central office appears to have created its plans independent of other departments. Requirements for teacher professional development, for instance, are greater than the amount of time available to work with teachers.

The *Long-Range Technology Plan for 2004-2007* also seems to have been written with little input from the Department of Teaching and Learning. For example, Objective 5.1 calls for technology to be integrated into 90 percent of all school curricular areas to support the Core Curriculum Content Standards, leading to higher student achievement. Objective 5.3 calls for all departments of the Newark

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Public Schools to infuse technology into their instructional areas. The team did not see any evidence that these objectives had been incorporated into these departments or their plans. In a similar vein, the team seldom saw classroom computers in use during any of its nine site visits to schools. In one school, in fact, not a single computer was turned on, although there were computers in every classroom.

Finally, the action plans do not indicate how priorities will be set or reconciled, and some of the action steps are so broad as to be meaningless.<sup>16</sup>

### Recommendations

4. *Revisit each department's strategic and action plans, and consolidate them into a single districtwide strategic plan with goals and steps that are reconciled across units and are systemic and coherent.*

The district has numerous plans that have sometimes been developed independently of other plans in the central office. The district should make the effort to consolidate these plans and reconcile inconsistencies in them. This exercise would also serve as a good opportunity to ensure that the objectives contained in the consolidated plan are clearly written and understandable. Each department's separate plan should be revisited to ensure that it is consistent with the new consolidated plan.

5. *Establish goals for the academic attainment of subgroups at the district and school levels that will move lower performing schools and students more rapidly toward acceptable levels of performance, and ensure that goals are effectively linked to action steps and district processes designed to narrow the achievement gaps over time.*

School improvement plans have explicit goals by subgroup, but often these goals are tagged to the lowest possible increments of improvement on the state assessments, i.e., safe harbor. This is permissible under NCLB, but the practice reflects low expectations and undermines the ability of the school district to achieve gains that are much beyond these minimally required levels of improvement.

In addition, it was not always clear to the site visit team that school staff explicitly linked their improvement strategies to goal attainment. Some building principals and staff could state specific strategies that the team could see permeating instructional practice. In other buildings, however, the goals and the strategies stated in the school plans were not in evidence. Explicit goals need to be visibly linked not only to the written plan, but evident in school practices and district monitoring.

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<sup>16</sup> For example, "Utilization of key staff (i.e., tutors, coaches, guidance counselors, etc.) to support all intended programs to insure success." This statement is too broad to have real meaning about what the objective is or how one would know how or when it was achieved.

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- 6. Develop stretch goals beyond what No Child Left Behind requires, including district goals for AP participation, core course-taking, and gifted and talented program participation. Incorporate action steps for attaining these stretch goals in the district's consolidated strategic plan.*

The school district has a number of “challenge” goals, but if it is going to restart its upward trajectory in student achievement and become the system of choice, it will have to aspire to higher levels of performance than current goals articulate. The district's current goals are articulated mostly around passing the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK), the Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment (GEPA), and the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA). But passing the HSPA will not be sufficient, if the school system expects its students to be ready for college or other postsecondary training opportunities that often require similar levels of academic rigor. The school district needs to put other targets in place that stretch its sights beyond what it is now required to do under state and federal sanction systems.

The school system also will need to put additional strategies in place to begin moving towards stretch goals, such as greater participation in AP courses. For example, the Newark Public Schools already has a partnership with the Johns Hopkins University's Center for Talented Youth and the Dodge Foundation to work with high-potential eighth-grade students. But this program reaches only 175 students districtwide, when the city is under pressure to raise academic attainment for all. (See subsequent sections for a more detailed discussion of secondary school recommendations.)

### **C. ACCOUNTABILITY**

It is not sufficient for a school system, particularly an urban one, to have goals if no one is held accountable for attaining them. Urban school systems that have seen substantial improvement have devised specific methods for holding themselves responsible for student achievement, usually starting at the top of the system and working down through central office staff and principals. Many successful districts also have instituted rewards for achieving their targets.

#### **Positive Findings**

- The district has moved aggressively to change its personnel evaluation system to incorporate student achievement as a variable in assessing staff. Student achievement is now a factor in the evaluation of senior instructional staff members, directors, principals, vice principals, and high school department chairs.
- Assistant superintendents and principals lose salary increments when certain academic goals are not achieved. The district has a training program for instructional staff members whose salary increments have been denied.
- The superintendent has moved aggressively to replace or reassign principals when school improvements were not being realized. In 1999, seven new principals were

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appointed, mostly to fill vacancies due to retirement. In 2004, there were 15 new principals, with only six filling vacancies due to retirement. The superintendent now uses job reclassifications, lateral moves, demotions, and terminations of principals to help jump-start a school's reforms or hold school leaders accountable for results.

### Areas of Concern

- The lack of districtwide goals beyond those implied in *No Child Left Behind* undermines the school system's ability to hold people accountable for attaining higher levels of performance.
- The freedom of principals and assistant superintendents to initiate and implement their own instructional strategies and materials may be undermining the district's instructional coherence.
- No rewards exist for longer-term achievement gains beyond the annual bonus system and no sanctions exist if student achievement shows no improvement. Nor are there specific incentives for faithful program implementation. The annual sanction system, while an excellent start on an accountability system, may actually spur teachers to emphasize drilling, work sheets, and other tactics to attain annual gains that are actually detrimental to longer-term comprehension once students reach middle and high schools.
- Principals are unionized and tenured, and hard to move or dismiss—even by the superintendent.
- Principals' evaluations contain a self-assessment and an assessment from the assistant superintendent. Principals indicate whether they had met specified goals and objectives on student achievement, program implementation and monitoring, staff development, student character-building, student attendance, School Leadership Council capacity-building, parent involvement, community relations, resource use, and safety and security. Other factors taken into account in principals' evaluations include ability to lead, manage, make decisions, communicate effectively, supervise staff, exhibit creativity, and implement an effective learning climate. The external evaluator designates whether he or she is in accord with the self-assessment.
- The academic factors on which elementary school principals are held accountable in their evaluations involve attainment only of "safe harbor" goals under *No Child Left Behind*. Goals for secondary school principals are somewhat higher. Evaluations of department chairs are also done on attainment of safe harbor targets.
- The new-teacher evaluation procedure does not have an explicit component that allows assessment of teachers according to what their students learn or how they



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progress academically.<sup>17</sup> Instead, teachers are evaluated annually on four domains: planning and preparation, the classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities—none of which has a component related to student academic attainment.

- The *Teaching Profile* and other ETS *Pathwise* documents furnished to the team to illustrate how teaching and learning is supported and monitored were not mentioned in interviews by anyone outside of the central office, raising a question about how widely implemented and used these materials were.
- The teacher evaluation procedures and documents do not require teachers to teach the curriculum. The *Pathwise* document, for instance, includes a framework for evaluating teachers. Only one component of the document, however—1C—mentions the curriculum, and the one reference pertains only to teachers at the “distinguished” level. Consequently, a teacher can be rated as effective without actually implementing the curriculum. Moreover, the document rates teachers as effective if they select their own goals for student learning, rather than the goals that the district has in mind.

### Recommendations

Urban school districts that are seeing significant gains in student performance attribute some of their progress to improved systems of accountability. The importance of these accountability systems is that they focus staff attention and energy on defined systemwide goals. The systems also make it clearer to staff members how and on which criteria they will be evaluated. Finally, they have the added benefit of signaling to the public that school staff members are responsible for results. It is important to note that accountability does not always have to be punitive.

#### 7. *Incorporate new goals into the district’s personnel evaluation system.*

Once the school district reviews and revamps its goal statements for improving student achievement and moving towards stretch goals, it should begin incorporating those sharpened and expanded objectives into the personnel evaluation system of central office administrators and principals.

#### 8. *Modify the language in the current evaluation system about withholding salary increments for failing to attain goals to language about rewarding goal attainment.*

Accountability is designed to sharpen staff focus and to clarify what staff members need to be working on and on what they will be assessed. Most research suggests that accountability systems are most effective when they reward positive behavior rather than when they punish the opposite. Punishments, moreover, often undermine accountability systems because the incentives are built around avoiding something rather than attaining something.

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<sup>17</sup> “Achievement Through Teaching Excellence: A System of Teacher Observation and Performance Evaluation”—A Guidebook for School Administrators and Teachers, 2006-2007.

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9. *Incorporate a component into the Pathwise document that assesses teachers on implementation of the curriculum at all levels of performance, and mute the component that allows teachers to select their own goals.*

As the finding above points out, the *Pathwise* framework for evaluating teachers does not include a component for implementing the curriculum unless teachers are at the “distinguished” level. Implementation of the curriculum should be a requirement for all teachers, at all levels.

10. *Ensure that priority is given to the part of each principal’s evaluation that focuses on the monitoring of coaches and implementing the curriculum and pacing system.*

The next section of this report discusses specific curriculum and instruction issues, but one observation that the team made during its classroom visits was that implementation of the district’s curriculum was not always done faithfully. “Faithful implementation” is not meant to be a “lockstep” mechanistic process. Teachers should have the authority to modify classroom activities to meet student needs. But, curriculum objectives and the level of rigor required for student success should be the focus of classroom instruction. And, principals should be aware of how students are progressing through the curriculum and be expected to provide instructional leadership as necessary to improve student progress. This recommendation is meant to boost the importance of classroom and coach monitoring as part of the principals’ evaluation system.

### **D. CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

Urban school districts that have seen substantial improvements in student achievement have a curriculum that is focused, coherent, and articulated clearly. Also, these districts analyze the content of their basal textbooks, if used, and compare those programs, adopting or creating supplemental materials to fill in any gaps between state standards and tests and the local reading and math program. The result is a complete package of texts, supplemental materials, and interventions needed to move student achievement forward.

The team examined language arts literacy (LAL) and mathematics curriculum documents that the district has prepared to guide the content and pacing of instruction at the fourth-grade, middle, and high school levels. The team did not conduct a complete audit of the curriculum; nor did it conduct an extensive analysis of how precisely the documents were aligned with state standards and assessments. Nonetheless, the team made a number of observations.

#### **Positive Findings**

- The school district has a traditionally organized instructional unit headed by a deputy superintendent who reports directly to the superintendent. Under the oversight of the deputy superintendent are five assistant superintendents, who supervise the School Leadership Teams (SLTs); an associate superintendent, who

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oversees gifted and talented, special education, grants, student services, adult education, extended-day programs, and alternative education; and an assistant superintendent, who supervises schools-to-careers, language arts, math, social studies, science, visual and performing arts, health and physical education, Title I, early childhood education, instructional technology, bilingual education and world languages, and media services. The deputy superintendent also supervises student information services and instructional staff development. The head of planning, evaluation, and testing reports directly to the superintendent.

- The Newark school district has adopted a strong districtwide reading program, Harcourt *Trophies*, that has been effective in raising student achievement in other urban school systems. The program was put into place in the 2004-05 school year.
- The high school language arts literacy curriculum guides and other curriculum documents prepared by the school district describe the philosophical approaches, beliefs, policies, course standards, instructional and assessment strategies, practices in each content area, and a correlation of the curriculum objectives with activities that would demonstrate mastery of those objectives. The documents usually correlate—but do not necessarily align—state standards with the district adopted textbooks in each area.
- The district has a number of ongoing literacy enhancement initiatives, including the Children’s Literacy Initiative, the National Urban Alliance, and other smaller programs.
- The Newark school district has selected potentially strong districtwide math programs, *Everyday Math* and *Connected Math*. Both programs have been in place in the district for about five years, and have been used effectively in other urban school districts across the country to raise student math achievement. The programs were initiated under a National Science Foundation (Local Systemic Change Initiative) grant.
- The district has also begun to phase in *Integrated Mathematics* (by McDougal Littell) and *Core-Plus Mathematics* (by Glencoe McGraw Hill).
- The district has implemented a 90-minute reading block and a 75-minute math block. However, these periods do not appear to be implemented uniformly.
- In the summer of 2006, 16 hours of staff development were offered to teachers in using the *Everyday Mathematics* and the *Connected Mathematics* programs.<sup>18</sup>
- The district has put a strong emphasis in its schools on improving writing skills, and participates in the National Writing Project. Examples of student writing—at each stage—are amply posted on the walls of most of the schools that the team visited.

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<sup>18</sup> Newark Public Schools Curriculum Statements, 2006-2007, page 7.

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- Newark’s instructional pacing guides provide general guidance to teachers for instructional planning.
- The school system publishes an extensive list of district-sanctioned instructional materials.
- The district has invested in classroom libraries for its schools with upwards of 300 books per classroom in order to improve fluency.
- The district operates a science resource center (Benjamin Banneker Science Center), something that most other major urban school systems do not have.
- The district has a televised homework program with dial-in opportunities. In addition, the mathematics department of the school district has an online resource (<http://www.math.newark.site.eboard.com>) with information about state testing, professional development, adopted textbooks, state assessment samples, activities, and problems.
- The district has developed a matrix to show the appropriate integration of technology into specific curricular areas.
- Every school visited by the team had computers available in its classrooms.
- The technology program in Newark provides each school with access to eBoards, a program whereby students can respond to questions or access links to digital resources. However, the site-visit team did not see any of the schools or classrooms actually using this resource.

### Areas of Concern

- The term “curriculum” carries multiple meanings in the Newark school system. In the *Newark Public Schools Curriculum Statements (2006-2007)*, the term refers not only to the curriculum documents stating what students should learn and how but also to the adopted content-area textbooks. This lack of clarity in what the curriculum is may contribute to some staff confusion about what is to be taught.
- The whole-school reform models that were required by the state under the Abbott decision have not proven to be very effective mechanisms for raising student achievement in most urban school systems. The state has moved away from these models over the last several years as it worked to implement *No Child Left Behind*. But the time and energy devoted by the school district in trying to get these state-mandated models to work on behalf of higher student performance was probably misguided. It is also unclear that the models have been fully eliminated from the individual schools in the district because their use remains optional.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> *District Whole School Reform Model: Reaching for the Brass Ring*. Newark Public Schools, 2006-2007.

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- New Jersey standards are sometimes vague in language arts and math, leaving them open to interpretation at the school and classroom levels. For example, state standards in grades 1-4 indicate that students “Be exposed to and read a variety of fiction and nonfiction, and produce evidence of reading.” Teachers can have vastly different interpretations of what “produce evidence of reading” means. Nor is there any guidance as to the level or depth at which the standard should be taught or how it might be assessed. The district has not attempted to clarify the meaning of such standards for teachers, so that they know precisely what the state expects.
- Similarly, the district’s curriculum documents do not define clearly for teachers what to teach, in what sequence, and at what levels of rigor. The result is that individual teachers are forced to use their best judgment in planning and organizing the curriculum for their own use. This situation also means that students transferring to schools within the district may not find the same levels of expectations about what they should know from one school to another.
- The district’s curriculum documents are not formatted similarly from subject to subject; nor do they contain the same levels of information across content areas or grade levels. It is reasonably clear that various content departments wrote the curriculum documents independently.
- Neither the district’s curriculum documents nor its pacing guides indicate when a teacher is expected to review concepts from the current or a previous year before students are tested. This is a critical omission because the state’s assessments are cumulative in nature.
- The district’s curriculum documents rely on the textbook publishers to have defined and guaranteed the alignment of district objectives, state standards, and tests.<sup>20</sup> This reliance on the publishers is often misguided because they often correlate topics at a very superficial level. The result is often a presumption of alignment that is not always well founded. In addition, the situation leads to an uncertainty about what exactly is to be taught and how the district attempts to identify and fill gaps between its programs and the state’s standards with appropriate supplemental materials.
- Both central-office interviews and school-site visits revealed irregular implementation of district-purchased programs and materials. Site visits often found teachers not using any of the materials purchased by the school district. The team, however, did not find many instances in which teachers were using texts that were left over from a previous adoption.

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<sup>20</sup> Example: The Newark Public Schools Office of Language Arts Literacy Correlation of the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards to Harcourt Trophies, 2005 Edition.

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- The district has an extensive number of instructional materials and initiatives in the schools.<sup>21</sup> It was not clear that teachers, principals, and coaches had been adequately trained on how to use all the materials and programs, or that these materials and programs had been articulated from one grade level to another.
- The team saw mid-level to low-level instructional rigor in most classrooms visited. Few classrooms appeared to be challenging students at high levels of comprehension. In fact, the team visiting the schools saw considerable use of practice worksheets and little discussion of concepts. Few teachers were seen calling on students in the classrooms or challenging them to synthesize ideas. And the team saw no clear strategies districtwide or at the school level for building academic vocabulary or spurring comprehension beyond those exercises articulated in the texts.
- The team also saw few instances in which differentiated instruction was actually occurring in the classrooms, despite this being a priority area of the school district and individual principals.
- Teachers appeared to be using the district’s pacing guides differently in each school visited by the team.
- The pacing guides call for critical science modules to be taught after the state test is administered. For example, if a teacher were to follow the current district pacing guide, the module on the human body would not be taught prior to the state test covering that topic. Experienced teachers have added topics on the human body during the time allotted for earth science, but the process by which this is done is episodic at best.
- The district’s pacing guides do not include guidance to teachers on how to modify or differentiate instruction for special education, English language learners, or gifted and talented students.
- The district’s language arts literacy (LAL) curriculum documents are not consistent in content, format, and organization. For example, the *Fourth Grade Curriculum Guide* consists of a publisher-produced correlation chart, ideas for teachers to implement a balanced-literacy approach, and sample writing rubrics. Secondary guides provide greater information, including philosophy and belief statements, course standards, and instructional and assessment strategies.
- The LAL curriculum documents do not identify prerequisite skills that students should have mastered before proceeding with the pending material. Other desirable components in the curriculum, such as strategies for the differentiation of instruction and sample assessment items, also are not included.

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<sup>21</sup> Newark Public Schools, Texts in Use 2006/2007.

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- The list of page numbers for each objective in the LAL *Fourth Grade Curriculum Guide* shows that some objectives have more page-number references than do others. There is no indication about whether this difference means that some objectives are more important than are others, or whether teachers are to supplement the objectives with other materials when there is little in the textbook to address an objective. There is also no indication of exactly which portion of the objective will be addressed on a given textbook page, leaving the teacher to search for the most appropriate pages.
- The LAL curriculum documents do not provide pacing guidance for teachers to help them ensure that critical content and skills are taught and practiced prior to the state's high-stakes test. It is true that many LAL concepts and skills are taught and reinforced throughout the school year, but the curriculum materials should be clear about which concepts and skills should be emphasized.
- Some LAL course standards are the same across grade levels. Consequently, it is not clear how the standards develop across grade levels so that teachers know what to emphasize and what level of mastery is expected.
- The secondary school-level LAL curriculum guides do not clearly reference New Jersey expectations and standards.
- Reading scores on the state assessment might be lower if not for the district's strong emphasis on writing. Schools put far more emphasis on the writing program than they did on the reading program.
- The team visiting classrooms saw surprisingly few culturally relevant materials or books in the classrooms, and many classroom libraries did not appear to be used.
- The curriculum guides for mathematics provide monthly instructional pacing in use of the *Everyday Mathematics* textbook. The guides also provide a side-by-side correlation of the textbook with the state standards and strands. The quarterly tests are aligned with textbook objectives. But because the textbook is covered in chapter order, there is also no way for teachers to be sure that the right content has been taught prior to state testing in March.
- Mathematics teachers lack an easy reference to ensure that they have taught essential content and that students are comfortable with testing formats. The team examined three mathematics guides: grades 4, 5 and 8. None of the guides clearly indicated how student mastery of the objectives would be assessed. The mathematics curriculum guides for grades 5 and 8 merely referenced the New Jersey Mathematics Core Standards by number. The teacher then has to look up the precise wording of the referenced standard in a separate section of the guide.
- In the grade 8 mathematics curriculum guide, the New Jersey Mathematics Core Standards are correlated with the *Connected Mathematics Program* investigations. However, some New Jersey standards have no listed correlation

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with classroom work at all. There is no indication of how to fill these obvious gaps between state requirements and the district's adopted textbook.

- The curriculum guide for grade 8 mathematics has 73 objectives to be taught in 151 days.
- The quarterly mathematics examinations are aligned with the textbook. There is no indication of how well they are aligned in content or predictive validity with the state assessments.
- The 2006 draft Integrated Algebra I curriculum guide correlates each algebra objective with the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards by number only. A cursory glance at the numbers listed in the document indicates that not all state standards are referenced. There is also no apparent mechanism to ensure that teachers know how to fill the gaps between the textbook and the state standards.
- The team saw little evidence that science experiments were being performed at the schools it visited, or that teachers were using manipulatives when teaching science lessons.
- The team did not see any of the technology-application matrices actually being integrated into the content areas during the classroom visits. No one interviewed by the team referred to the use of these matrices.

### Recommendations

Research to-date suggests that urban school districts that are improving student performance have standardized their curricula and have adopted a more rigorous approach to reading and math instruction. This approach brings greater focus to the districts' instructional programs, mitigates the effects of high student mobility, and leverages the ability of districts to design and carry out the support and monitoring of program implementation.

11. *Conduct an independent alignment analysis of the gaps between Harcourt Trophies, Everyday Math, Connected Mathematics, and the district's science materials with the state standards and assessments. At the high school level, include an alignment or gap analysis on the SAT.*

One of the greatest levers for improving student achievement involves alignment. (The other involves professional development.) Students can be highly engaged in wonderful and exciting learning activities, but if those activities do not include the content that will be assessed—at the level of rigor that is expected—then there may not be any effect on what the school district and the schools are held accountable for, namely, higher student achievement levels.

Alignment differs from correlation, however. A correlation indicates only a superficial similarity of topics. Alignment refers to the match between the standard



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and the content objective, not only topically but also in terms of the depth or rigor at which the topic is taught, vocabulary necessary for mastery, skills needed to demonstrate mastery, ability to apply the material, and comfort with various formats in which the concept may appear.

For example, instruction in “finding the main idea” appears to be a straightforward notion on its face. However, an explicit understanding is needed—districtwide and at each grade level—about whether students are being instructed on the *stated* main idea or on an *inferred* main idea. Teachers need to know whether students should be able to identify the main idea of a paragraph, a longer reading selection, reading selections of different types, or multiple reading selections. In addition, teachers need to know which genres may be involved. Instruction should differ depending on whether students will be asked to simply recognize the main idea from a multiple choice list; select the best summary from a choice of possible summaries; select or write a title or headline; summarize the main idea in their own words; or compare and contrast the main idea from the selected material with other ideas in other reading material. Will students be asked to select details from the reading passage to support their conclusions about the main idea? All of these possibilities exist for how classroom instruction is pursued. The gap analysis referred to in this recommendation is essential if teachers are to know what teaching the “main idea” really means.

Finally, the specificity of the learning objectives in the curriculum is essential. The curriculum should provide enough particulars or details to ensure that teachers throughout the district have a common understanding of what students must learn at each grade level. This clarity is the foundation for all curriculum guidance and the focus for all professional development and coaching.

12. *If gaps emerge during the alignment analysis of the curriculum and the state standards, then fill them with district-identified or district-developed supplemental materials in reading, math, social studies, and science.*

Supplemental materials should be identified or developed to fill gaps identified in the alignment analysis. Pacing guides and other documents should be amended to indicate when and how supplemental materials are used.

13. *Revise curriculum documents and pacing guides according to a standard set of specifications, so that they have a common look and feel.*

Teachers will utilize curriculum guides only when they perceive them as useful and necessary. Elementary teachers, in particular, find this level of specificity and uniformity helpful because they often teach multiple subjects. The curriculum guides should form a one-stop document for teachers with a single organizational structure and format across content areas and grades. For example, the district should incorporate the *Curriculum Statements 2006-2007* and the *Policy and Practice* document into the curriculum guides rather than keeping them as separate documents. Teachers doing lesson planning should not have to turn to multiple documents to be

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sure that their lessons are addressing the necessary content. A common-specifications curriculum document might include—

- An introduction and philosophy statement
- A description of district objectives and their alignment with state standards and testing
- A pacing guide
- An indication of what portions of a concept being taught in a particular grade level have been presented in prior grades<sup>22</sup>
- Samples of how to teach a specific concept or a lesson plan
- Descriptions of how and when to use supplemental materials
- Samples of how to assess student mastery of the objectives, including samples that go beyond the New Jersey-style assessments
- Definitions of terms used in the guide and courses
- Suggestions for remediation when students have not met prerequisites or ideas on use of various intervention strategies (See subsequent sections of this report.)
- Suggestions for adapting specific-learning objectives for special populations
- Annotated exemplars of student work to illustrate levels of mastery of specified objectives.

While curriculum leaders in the central office might develop a consolidated guide of this type, it should be written with teachers. It should also be tested with focus groups of teachers, piloted by teachers, and revised according to teachers' reactions. The results should be important for both amending the guide and in shaping professional development on its use. If this kind of exercise cannot be done in an expeditious fashion, then the district should pursue some of the following additional recommendations.

14. *Anchor the district's curriculum goals and objectives to state standards in a way that explains the concepts and skills intended at that grade level. (This approach should include clarifying the rigor reflected or implied in the Directory of State Specifications and Sample Items, and backmapping the curriculum objectives to ensure that the K-2 grade objectives are sufficiently rigorous to build the prerequisite skills for grades 3 and above.)*

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<sup>22</sup> For example, a fourth-grade teacher could see what had been taught about that objective in earlier grades.

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The state’s standards articulate what its leaders consider the essential concepts, knowledge, and skills that students should know and that will form the basis for its assessments. The district is free to add to these essentials, but the district should ensure that, at a minimum, all these skills are taught. Simply using the state’s standards may not provide sufficient guidance for teachers and administrators. Moreover, using the textbook alone may not address all state standards sufficiently. To provide guidance, the district might consider—

- Spiraling objectives from grade 12 downward so the foundation for each objective is developed in prior grade levels<sup>23</sup>
  - Building all state assessments and standards into district objectives
  - Clarifying all objectives in a way that their descriptions articulate the critical attributes and levels of learning expected of students at each grade level and course.
15. *Develop and train teachers on a set of sample lesson plans that demonstrate how instructional components are integrated and how to attain levels of rigor that will allow students to increase their achievement on state tests and on college entrance examinations.*
16. *Revise the district’s pacing guides to ensure that all concepts and skills are taught, practiced over time, and mastered before the state test is given, and to guarantee that sufficient time is allotted for review.*

The district’s pacing guides should clearly articulate the content and sequence of teaching throughout the school year. The guides should also ensure a reasonable amount of uniformity for students moving from one school to another. And they should form the basis, in conjunction with the state standards and assessments, for the benchmark assessment process over the course of the school year. Well-designed pacing systems should be able to—

- Support teachers and administrators
- Ensure that students have an equal opportunity to progress through the curriculum
- Ensure that state and district requirements are mastered in time for students to be successful on state examinations
- Ensure that students have the academic preparation for future work

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<sup>23</sup> Note that prior analysis of state standards and testing information will inform the district’s curriculum writers if there are any learning gaps or repetitions in the standards. Gaps can be filled with clear district objectives. Standards that are repeated across grade levels need to be clarified or introduced so that teachers know the level of the content that they are responsible for teaching at a given grade level.

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- Provide continuity of instruction in districts in which students frequently change schools
- Free teachers to work on quality classroom instruction, rather than having each teacher spend time independently inventing the sequence of instruction and determining the importance of each objective.

The district's pacing guides also should be realistic in terms of how much time is actually available for teaching in a school year, and should—

- Define a specific period of time for teaching concepts, knowledge, and skills
- Provide time for re-teaching, as necessary
- Consider the number of days available for actual instruction (after subtracting holidays, snow days, testing days, etc.)
- Allow for the explicit review of concepts, knowledge, and skills throughout the year
- Build in references to the materials teachers use to teach those concepts, without assuming that the textbook is the curriculum
- Provide indications of how and when to supplement the textbook where it is weakly aligned with state assessments, and what portions of the textbook are optional
- Indicate how to assess student learning, including and going beyond state assessments
- Be revisited on a regular basis if student performance indicates the need to revise the pacing system, clarify objectives, and determine if additional materials are needed, or targeted specific professional development is required.

17. *Include explicit references to phonics materials for each unit of instruction when revising the pacing guides in grades K-3.*

The importance of ensuring that children acquire good literacy skills in the early primary grades has been well documented. Students who do not read well by the end of third grade are at a higher risk of academic failure and dropping out of school than are children who develop good reading skills in the first years of formal schooling. Districts tend to show stronger gains in reading achievement and avoid having disproportionate numbers of children assigned to special education if they have implemented a strong reading program with phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary development, and text comprehension that is organized, delivered, and managed in a way that is in line with good research.

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18. *Provide examples of student writing at each grade level, with commentary, analysis, and suggestions on next steps for writing improvement.*

The team reviewed the Language Arts Literacy Assessment Manual, which provides general guidance for administering a writing assessment and gauging its results using the state rubric. The team did not see districtwide exemplars of student writing that reflected district expectations for what quality writing would look like or what was expected, although the team saw lots of writing at various stages displayed in the schools. The samples of student writing at the sites visited appeared to reflect varying standards of what constituted quality writing at a given grade level. Selecting or developing exemplars of quality writing for each grade level would provide teachers, administrators, parents and students a better understanding of what it means to write at grade level.

19. *Develop sample model lessons that show how instructional components are integrated into each unit of instruction.*

Model lessons can illustrate how a teacher can approach a particularly difficult concept or a concept that testing shows is not being mastered consistently. The model lessons should include the curriculum objectives, classroom instructional materials, and optional strategies. It is also important that the lessons actually deal with teaching the concept rather than providing a series of activities that can only be done once the concept has been learned.

20. *Incorporate references to English language learners, special education students, and gifted and talented students in the pacing guides so that teachers have guidance on how to differentiate instruction.*

In most schools the team visited, principals mentioned that they have held professional development sessions on differentiating instruction, but the team saw little differentiation actually being done.

21. *Incorporate intervention strategies into the district's pacing guides and curriculum documents.*

The team did not see explicit references in the district's pacing system to the use of the district's intervention strategies. The pacing guides should give some indication to teachers of what they can do to address the needs of students who are performing below grade level. Introductory activities that build on student understanding of new concepts and skills, or suggestions for how to differentiate instruction, would be helpful, particularly for inexperienced teachers who want to help students improve but need guidance to do so.

22. *Consider using early diagnostic testing in mathematics and develop intervention strategies accordingly.*

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Just as there are reading assessments to diagnose early reading problems, there are a number of new early math diagnostics that the district might consider using. Some successful districts use Kathy Richardson's assessments to diagnose early math achievement problems. The district might want to look at programs used in the San Diego and San Francisco school districts.

### E. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TEACHER QUALITY

A common feature of many of the faster-improving urban school districts across the country is a high-quality and cohesive professional development program that is closely aligned with the curriculum. These professional development programs are often defined centrally, but are built around the district's instructional program, delivered uniformly across the district, and differentiated in ways that address the specific needs of teachers and administrators. These faster-improving districts also find ways to ensure that some of their better teachers are working in schools with the greatest needs.

#### Positive Findings

- The Newark Public Schools has invested a considerable amount of funds and energy in professional development to boost academic results, although much of the professional development appears to have been provided on the implementation of various commercial products and not to ongoing strategic needs. In addition, professional development often is planned independently at the individual-school level.
- The Newark teachers' union has developed a CD-ROM training program in conjunction with Seton Hall University that includes a searchable list of New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards with links to sample activities and worksheets. The union has also developed CD-ROM-based training on special education issues, with a strong reference guide for understanding the concept of inclusion.
- The district has an "Expanded Local Professional Development Committee" that helps set topics for staff training in reading, math, and science, and reports on participation and staff ratings of sessions.
- The district's *Language Arts Literacy Policy and Practices and Elementary, Middle and Secondary Schools* document lists (on page 8) training opportunities for new teachers on the use of language arts literacy assessments.
- The district has provided strong professional development in math by using *Developing Mathematical Ideas* and *Lenses on Learning* (for administrators). However, the team did not see a clear plan for expanding the program or infusing the training districtwide.

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- The district has an extensive array of talented personnel to provide on-site professional development, including resource-teacher coordinators, instructional coaches, lead teachers, and department chairs.
- The district operates a new-teacher induction program for all newly hired instructional staff members. The program provides a mentor for new teachers and includes 20 days of direct classroom observation.
- New teachers also have access to a New Teacher Resource program, a New Teacher Volunteer Institute, and a New Teacher Mandatory Orientation.
- The district has a tuition reimbursement program, although staff members interviewed by the team indicated that the program did not include reimbursements for reading or literacy courses.
- The district also operates a training program for provisional teachers, in conjunction with Teach for America and other partners, to provide teaching certification-development for alternative-route teachers.
- The district, moreover, operates a one-day orientation program for prospective per diem teachers who expect to serve as substitute teachers.
- The district provides 20 coaching sessions through the Children's Literacy Institute.
- The district conducts its own *Reading Recovery* training program, one of the few in the country.
- The district also has a program to support the application of teachers to become nationally board certified, but the school system has only produced a handful of National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) teachers since the program's formation.
- The district provides an annual professional development program to support its interdisciplinary curriculum project.
- The district uses *ParaPro* to certify the qualifications of Title I paraprofessionals under *No Child Left Behind*.
- Principals are on 12-month contracts. Not all urban school districts have their principals on year-round contracts. In school districts that lack this policy, principals miss out on professional development time that others on 12-month contracts often have.

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### Areas of Concern

- Approximately 81 percent of the district’s 3,664 teachers in the core subjects (i.e., language arts literacy, mathematics, science, and social studies) were considered to be “highly qualified” in 2005-6 under NCLB, a rate below that of most other urban school districts.<sup>24</sup>
- People interviewed by the team viewed the district’s induction program as insufficient to support new teachers.
- The district lacks a districtwide principals’ academy devoted to enhancing the administrative and instructional leadership skills of the school system’s principals. (The district, however, does provide professional development for teachers wanting to earn administrators’ or principals’ certification, as well as training for other aspiring administrators.)
- The district’s professional development is mostly voluntary, rather than required. The result is that the ability of the district to train all of its teachers and staff on its instructional goals and initiatives is dependent on voluntary attendance at professional development sessions.
- The district does not appear to use its student achievement data very effectively to inform its professional development program or to differentiate its instruction.
- No single districtwide professional development oversight process exists to enable the leadership to prioritize, coordinate, or target professional development time.
- There is no apparent sequencing of professional development for teachers that would lead to more effective instructional effectiveness. The team did not see a districtwide written description of what teachers need to know and be able to do pedagogically or in terms of content.
- Systematic tracking or targeting of the district’s professional development offerings seems to be lacking. Principals’ monitoring of classroom practice does not appear to track how skills presented in professional development sessions are used.
- The evaluation of the district’s professional development does not include any assessment of impact on student achievement or teacher classroom practice.
- People interviewed by the team emphasized the likelihood of substantial teacher turnover in the next few years due to retirements, but no one indicated that there was a plan to address the issue.

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<sup>24</sup> Source: Email correspondence from Gayle Griffin to Ricki Price-Baugh, May 8, 2007. Figures were not available yet for the 2006-07 school year.



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- Teachers are often hired late and a large number of teaching vacancies exist because of deficiencies in the personnel system.
- The district lacks an incentive program to encourage the best or most effective teachers to teach in the district's poorest-performing schools
- No clear system exists for informing central office staff of new teachers and the reassignment of teachers, which may affect decision-making on professional development and support.

### Recommendations

Many of the faster-improving urban school districts across the country are standardizing, focusing, and differentiating their professional development to ensure better implementation of their curricula and to clarify for principals and teachers what is expected. This standardized approach does not mean that each school is limited in the kind of professional development that it can promote. Schools may supplement the districtwide training with other activities that are tailored to the needs of that school, but the standardized approach does require principals and teachers to participate in professional development that is common across schools and is based on district priorities.

23. *Develop a districtwide professional development plan that includes district priorities, curriculum, pacing guides, accountability requirements, and evaluation procedures. Develop the plan as a collaborative process with content area directors, instructional leaders, professional development staff, the research office, teachers, and their union.*

Allowances should be made for teachers' ability to select their own professional development, but the district should also be able to require professional development on its priorities and curriculum. Moreover, teachers should be paid for their participation in required training sessions. There is little other way for a school district trying to raise academic performance to ensure that teachers have the requisite skills to do so.

Professional development in many urban school districts that the Council has reviewed tends to cover topics rather than data-driven priorities. Newark is not much different in how it structures its professional development. The team encourages school system leaders to develop a districtwide professional development plan based on the district's revised goals, targets, priorities, and student performance data for each grade and content area. The system needs to consider a number of issues.

First, the district should articulate its highest-priority topics for professional development. The team suggests that sessions for all instructional staff members include work on curriculum objectives and the rigor required at every grade level for students to succeed academically. Sessions should also include training on the pacing guide and the content areas coming up for students in the next quarter of instruction.

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Second, the district should consider whether the professional development should be delivered locally, defined centrally, or some combination of the two. Delivery options run the gamut from electronic through individual coaching, provided centrally, or school-based. Most districts use a combination. The most important factor, however, is the content and how it matches the goals that the district wants to attain.

Third, the district needs to think through how to sequence its professional development and how to articulate what impact it is designed to have. A single professional development session is unlikely to have much effect, but the district has limited opportunities to provide multiple sessions. Consequently, the district may want to consider how it leverages the effects of limited professional development through its coaching system and other onsite resources.

Fourth, the district should differentiate its professional development in the same ways that it aspires to differentiate classroom teaching. A new teacher may need very different levels of support than an experienced master teacher needs. Principals approach curriculum and monitoring from a different vantage point than a classroom teacher. A successful plan addresses these varying needs and weaves districtwide priorities together into a single strategy for professional development.

Finally, the district should begin evaluating the impact of its overarching professional development strategy on student achievement rather than assessing participants' receptivity to the individual training sessions. The district should be able to code and track the participation of individual teachers in professional development by type, with student achievement data as a starting point. This approach should be taken for the purposes of shaping and providing professional development, rather than as a mechanism for evaluating individual teachers. But it is important to know whether the professional development is worth doing or whether it needs to be revised.

All Abbott school districts received *A Framework for Planning and Reporting Professional Learning in Abbott School Districts 2006*. This state-developed document sets out requirements for professional development that include—

- Supporting a culture of continuous professional inquiry focused on improving achievement of all students
- Helping teachers gain content knowledge and teaching skills
- Delivering cohesive professional development that is fully aligned with the district's instructional priorities
- Stressing the importance of collaborative team learning.

The state's reporting requirements for professional development clearly favor job-embedded training sessions and team learning over individual learning; a focus on student work over adult work; and teacher-driven professional development over outside provider-driven professional development. But Abbott reporting requirements

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appear to put greater emphasis on compliance than on effectiveness. The team strongly suggests reversing these priorities.

24. *Ensure that the professional development department acts as a broker and clearinghouse for training to the same audiences.*

The team encourages the district to resist trying to deal with too many professional development topics in a single year to avoid pulling individual teachers in so many directions that it is impossible to devote real attention to mastering any of district's priorities. The professional development unit also ought to act to prevent too many professional development offerings from being scheduled at the same times for identical audiences, as was reported to the team. For example, there may be training on "inclusion" that could be integrated into training sessions on the language arts literacy curriculum or its pacing systems, rather than having different sessions on each. The professional development unit could also track enrollment and evaluate results.

25. *Set and publish a districtwide professional development calendar.*

This action would help the district coordinate its professional development, and it also could help the district think about its professional development sessions more strategically.

26. *Consider adopting or studying teacher induction programs used in Clark County (Nev.), Houston, and other Great City School districts.*

Teacher induction programs can be useful not only in orienting new teachers to the district, but also in retaining them in the system. The district might consider convening focus groups to determine the types of support that new teachers view as the most helpful and to identify the kinds of additional support that might be useful. Most districts with good induction systems focus their professional development on knowledge of the district and its systems, content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, classroom management, and building connections to the city and fellow staff members. Induction programs of three years or so are judged more effective than are one-year programs. In planning a new teacher induction system, consider the following concepts from the Houston school district—

- New employees have varying needs when they enter the district and, as a result, need a differentiated program of induction and support.
- Just-in-time knowledge has greater usefulness to an employee and, therefore, knowledge and support should be provided when an employee is more likely to be ready to learn and be able to apply the learning immediately.
- Adults learn in many different ways, so information needs to be presented using different approaches, including group learning, tutoring, reading, and online learning.

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- Employee needs merit consideration with respect to what types of knowledge are presented and when. For example, payroll and benefit information should be provided before working with new teachers on the curriculum and ways to instruct students.
- Teaching and learning are complex acts, and seminars for beginning teachers need to focus on the very basic skills needed to plan and carry out classroom instruction.
- Research-based teaching practices for obtaining higher student achievement need to be the focus of most professional development for new teachers.
- Often new employees, even if they are experienced, enter new organizations and take on new assignments with some anxiety, so processes and people should be in place to anticipate and reduce these anxieties.
- Teachers go through stages of career development, and a successful program of induction and support needs to be built around those stages.
- Increasing the number of years during which induction support is provided may require additional staff and professional development for mentors.
- As teachers are retained over time, salary costs will increase, but recruitment costs will decrease.
- There is also a fiscal impact to paying and rewarding mentor teachers who provide the induction supports for new teachers. And there are increasing demands on mentors over time to develop their peer coaching skills and reflective practice.

To achieve an improved teacher induction program, consider the following steps—

- Invest in training to develop staff expertise to lead a teacher induction program
- Identify a three-year program of knowledge, skills, and resources for new teachers and develop the training (online, traditional, and coaching)
- Identify central-office staff members who can be assigned to the new teacher program
- Provide information and training for administrators so that their role in the induction and support of new teachers is articulated clearly
- Provide job descriptions to teachers and mentors, and training on accountability systems for mentors and coaches

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- Provide an automated tracking system and a clerical person assigned to maintain records to determine if new teachers are receiving appropriate coaching and support.

27. *Include the interpretation of test data and the use of intervention programs in the district's professional development program.*

Teachers may know from test data and in-class performance that a student needs additional support, but this knowledge will not matter if the teacher does not understand what to do about seeing that the student gets this support. The district's professional development program should include training on the interpretation and use of data, and on the use of intervention strategies for students who are falling behind or who are already behind.

28. *Require training for curriculum writers before conducting the alignment study, revising the curriculum, and sharpening the pacing system.*

All the individuals involved in revising the curriculum need to be working from a common understanding of terminology and purpose. They need to be clear about the specifications for the document and the quality of instructional planning and guidance that the district expects. Many districts set aside time in the writing schedule to enable all who are involved to work together with curriculum leaders until each participant clearly understands and can perform the required work. The district might leverage the work from its National Science Foundation project and the Developing Mathematical Ideas project to inform some of this professional development to build stronger teacher content knowledge and stronger instructional practices.<sup>25</sup>

29. *Develop a districtwide principals' academy that can provide professional development in instructional leadership, effective practice, use of instructional data, use of curriculum and pacing guides, deployment of coaches, differentiated instruction, intervention strategies, and classroom monitoring systems.*

A district can have the most up-to-date curriculum documents and have selected strong instructional programs, but their effective implementation is critical. Only principals can assure that. Principals' academies exist in many urban school districts to provide both required coursework and individualized coaching and professional development for school leaders.

### F. REFORM PRESS

Urban school systems that are succeeding in improving student achievement are not waiting for their reforms to trickle down from the central office into the schools and classrooms. Instead, these faster-improving school districts have developed specific strategies to drive instructional reforms into schools and classrooms, and they create

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<sup>25</sup> Teacher ratings of professional development through the National Science Foundation (NSF) project have generally been favorable. Source: Local Systemic Change: Ratings for the 2005-2006 Core Evaluation Report, Year 4. Newark Public Schools, May 2006.

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strategies to monitor the implementation of these reforms to ensure their integrity and comprehensiveness.

### **Positive Findings**

- Many school improvement plans have concrete, measurable student achievement goals, although some do not.
- Principals and assistant superintendents feel free to initiate and implement instructional strategies, but their sense of freedom may be undermining implementation of district curriculum to some extent.
- A 2005 survey of principals generally indicated that their interactions with the central office were helpful and met expectations.<sup>26</sup>
- The district has developed generic “look-for” protocols to be used by administrators to monitor classroom practice.
- Many schools visited by the site team offered afterschool and Saturday classes for students who need additional learning time. There were also Saturday Acceleration programs for small numbers of gifted students in grades 1-8.
- The Office of Mathematics had developed a list of services provided to high schools to ensure that teachers had the curriculum documents and High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) preparation and algebra I materials they needed.

### **Areas of Concern**

- School improvement plans did not sufficiently link data to decisions about proposed activities. Some plans articulated strategies only as lists of activities.
- Instructional programs and materials are often considered optional at the school level—or schools feel free to supplant district programs at will. (The team did not see extensive evidence of other programs in the schools, however.)
- District instructional staff members have not cemented their instructional leadership and prerogatives fully. Staff members appear to be concerned that negative comments will undermine respect for their work, rather than serve as an impetus for making their rationale in that work clearer or reexamining their work in light of feedback.
- There appeared to the team to be a general lack of recognition of the importance of districtwide curricular cohesion or systemic movement. Most school-staff

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<sup>26</sup> Executive Summary, *Principals’ Perceptions Regarding the Quality and Relevance of Services They Receive from Central Office Departments*, 2005.

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members focused solely on their own schools or School Leadership Teams without much sense of the broader district strategy.

- The *School Leadership Teams I, III, IV, V Action Plans for 2005-2006*<sup>27</sup> included an action step that called for implementing curriculum mapping to ensure that the “curriculum is not repeated year after year and a central guide is established.” The district’s curriculum, however, should be the instrument for ensuring that the curriculum is not repeated across years. If each school is creating its own curriculum map—rather than operating from the district’s guide—then the districtwide program could be further fractured.
- Site visits by the team revealed heavy reliance on whole-group instruction and instructional activities that presented very little intellectual challenge to students.
- District walk-through procedures are used to monitor instruction, but not the curriculum being taught or its pacing. In the site visit, team members received many different protocols that principals used in conducting walkthroughs. None of the nine sites presented the district protocol as the one in use. The “walk-through” form at one school visited by the team, for instance, asked the observer simply to look for evidence that a particular focus area or priority was seen in a classroom; evidence that it was missing; or evidence that something was in place that seemed to contradict the area of focus.
- The regional structure of the school district’s administration—the School Leadership Teams—may be inhibiting the uniform and consistent flow of information, as well as expectations and faithful program implementation. The SLTs do not appear to be implementing the district’s programs with the same degree of fidelity; nor was there uniform understanding among the SLT staff about the importance of this districtwide strategy for improving student achievement.
- The district has designated a minimum amount of time for instruction in some content areas, but the site visit team noted inconsistent class schedules and/or time allotments from school to school.
- The roles and responsibilities of coaches and resource-teacher coordinators were not clearly stated. No evaluation system existed that was specifically designed to measure the effectiveness of each coach or resource-teacher coordinator.

### Recommendations

Urban school districts that are seeing steady progress in student achievement do not develop new policies at the central office and hope that these policies will find their

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<sup>27</sup> This action step appears on page 17 and page 21 for Educational Services, and on page 25 for School Leadership Team II

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way into district classrooms. Instead, these school districts design specific strategies for ensuring that reforms are being supported and implemented in all classrooms.

### *30. Consider phasing out SLT offices or transfer them back to the central office.*

The SLT offices of the school district, with their relative freedom in implementing the district's instructional programs at the school level, may be one of the sources of irregular implementation of those programs. These offices are not the only source of spotty program implementation, as previous findings have indicated, but the superintendent should make some determination about whether this structure can be an instrument for better program implementation or is a drag on it.

### *31. Inform School Leadership Team (SLT) and school staff about the necessity to follow the revised curriculum and pacing guides and to monitor what the schools are doing instructionally.*

There are several common reasons for teachers being reluctant to use curriculum materials. First, they may not understand how these materials differ from textbook resources. Second, they may not understand that textbooks are not perfectly aligned in content and rigor with what students need to learn at each grade level in New Jersey. Third, the documents themselves may be open to interpretation, making them useless to teachers or require too much of a time commitment from teachers to know how to use them. Teachers need to see evidence that using the curriculum and pacing guides will improve student performance. The district should determine the reasons that schools and teachers are not uniformly using the guides, and address those issues.

### *32. Revise walkthrough protocols so that principals and/or SLT leaders make instructional observations, monitor curriculum implementation and pacing, and look for evidence of student work at the needed level of rigor. Ensure that principals have input into the design of the protocols, that they know how to use the instrument, and that their supervisors work with them on how they use their observations to coach staff.*

Not every school has to use the same walkthrough instrument, but all principals and supervisors need to be observing similar aspects of classroom instruction, use of the curriculum, status on the pacing system, level of instructional rigor, student engagement, and classroom management. This type of monitoring need not extend to more than three or four minutes per classroom. Principals should not use the results for evaluative purposes but to determine whether coaching or professional development might be helpful. SLT leaders, in turn, should be helping the principals on their instructional leadership.

### *33. Review all school improvement plans to ensure that they include data analysis on student achievement and actual strategies for boosting achievement—not a laundry list of activities.*



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School improvement plans can be useful tools for school staff or a compliance exercise. The team was concerned that district reform efforts did not always seem very cohesive, and that many of the plans reviewed by the team appeared to be paperwork exercises rather than planning documents. School improvement plans should be written around district goals, but most did not show a careful analysis of student achievement data. Without specific reference to data, selected activities appeared to be listed without consideration of priorities or program needs, such as training time or monitoring. Often activities were vague or the plan mentioned so many activities that they would be difficult to implement well, monitor, or evaluate.

School improvement plans can also serve as a basis for district monitoring of school progress on its goals. Monitoring results tell the district or its SLT offices how well initiatives and interventions are supporting the work of the classroom.

The district might contact the Columbus Public Schools to learn more about how its school improvement plans incorporate district priorities and guide instructional activities of staff and teachers.

34. *Clarify the expectations for literacy and math coaches by aligning their work with school goals for improving student achievement. Make student achievement and the classroom implementation of district initiatives and reforms significant components of coaches' evaluations.*

Many persons interviewed by the Council team provided varying descriptions of the work of instructional coaches. While there is room for variation in how these individuals do their work each day, it is important that everyone sees the role of coaches in similar ways. Having an evaluation procedure that assesses coaches on their job responsibilities and coaches' effects on student achievement might be helpful. This type of evaluation might also help coaches to have a consistent understanding about what they should be doing. Principals should be required to explain the expectations for coaches, department chairs, and any person assigned to support the work of teachers to the entire faculty and clarify what the principal expects of the faculty.

35. *Develop and provide a monthly in-service session for literacy and math coaches so that they can participate in and provide professional development on implementation of the learning targets and revised pacing guides. Ensure that math coaches provide teachers explicit guidance on how to teach the key mathematical ideas to foster understanding and how to provide remedial assistance to students within the lesson.*

The district has invested appropriately in providing on-site support for literacy and math instruction through its coaches. Nevertheless, achievement scores have not improved much in the last several years. It is also possible that coaches do not have time to work with teachers or that coaches may not be working on the right things. Professional development beyond coaches' monthly meetings, clarification of roles, and evaluations may help sharpen the work of coaches and improve their effectiveness, rather than having them spend so much time and effort reviewing

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material from the previous year. Summer institutes might be considered for coaches to enhance their skills.

36. *Standardize enforcement of the student code of conduct and student registration and withdrawal procedures, including the transfer of student records, routine district communications, etc.*

The team is in favor of school staff having input into decisions at the campus level, but it also was concerned about saddling school staff with demands that force staff members to spend time on noninstructional issues. School systems are more efficient if they provide procedures that are used dependably on every campus. Student disciplinary procedures are one of those activities that schools need not reinvent one at a time.

### **G. Data, Assessment, and Evaluation**

Two of the most noticeable features of urban school systems that are seeing significant improvements in student achievement are the regular assessment of student progress and the use of data to decide on the nature and placement of intervention strategies before the end of each school year. Districts that are more effective also use data to shape and define their curricula and their professional development content and strategies. Moreover, these districts use data to monitor school and district progress and to hold people accountable for results.

#### **Positive Findings**

- The district has implemented new quarterly and midterm assessments to generate midyear progress data.
- The district can readily produce reports on the number of students enrolled in the courses being assessed, the number of students tested, and the number and percent of students passing by question type.
- The district administers a practice test for the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) and disaggregates student performance by cluster (such as numerical operations, measurement, and data analysis), type of question, and average score earned.
- Assistant superintendents work with principals to analyze data.
- The Newark schools work in collaboration with the Paterson Public Schools to retain Measurement Incorporated, the developer of HSPA and the Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment (GEPA), to build a local assessment program that is linked in content and format (multiple choice and open-ended responses) to the state's core language arts and mathematics content standards for grades 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, and 10. The program provides diagnostic information on student performance.

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It is not clear, however, whether the benchmark tests are designed at the same level of rigor as the state tests.

- Several schools visited by the team had “assessment walls” that tracked or graphed student progress in reading.
- The *Action Plans for Teaching and Learning and for School Leadership Teams for 2005-2006* had some action steps that were specifically linked to the use of subgroup data.
- Data are published for each school, indicating how its students’ passing rates compare with the previous year’s performance by grade level and how these rates compare within its SLT and the district as a whole.
- The district is evaluating several of its major programs and initiatives, including *Read 180*, the early childhood program, and the summer enrichment program. Student performance is a component of these evaluations.

### Areas of Concern

- The team saw no indication that data were used systematically by the district to modify curriculum, instructional practices, pacing guides, or professional development.
- Benchmark tests appear to measure low-level academic attainment, which could provide a false sense of confidence that students are doing better than they are.
- The team saw little analysis of benchmark and test results to inform instruction. For example, data provided by the Office of Mathematics for the first quarter of 2005 on the HSPA mathematics diagnostic test for 2005 indicated low performance by high school students in all four strands tested. There was no indication of steps taken to address the results. School site visits did reveal that some schools have staff members who are adept at working with student performance data, but this was not the case at every school.
- While a pilot on-line testing program (ABACUS) is available in some high schools—giving teachers immediate results, some teachers and administrators interviewed by the team reported that quarterly and midterm exam results sometimes took two weeks to get back to schools.
- Some teachers reported not having spring 2006 state test results on their students in November. (Student results were not posted by the state on its Web site until March 2007).
- Student participation rates on benchmark tests are unclear. The team could not locate data on this indicator.

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- There is uncertain alignment with or predictive validity of the quarterly tests with state tests. (The team could not find studies of these indicators.)
- The district does not appear to have a regular schedule of program evaluation.
- The research and evaluation office is too understaffed to meet the evaluation needs of an urban school district.
- The data supplied in the language arts *End-of-Year Report 2005-2006 Mid-Term/Final Exams; Grades 9-11 Results and Analysis* inaccurately computes the total percent of students passing. For example, in computing the total percent passing for a grade level, the author mistakenly averaged the individual school grade-level passing percentages rather than calculating the total number of students passing and dividing by the number of students tested. Thus, rather than the 70 percent passing shown for grade 9 magnet high school midterm results, the actual percent passing is 65.5 percent. All percentages in any column or row labeled “totals” are inaccurate. Conclusions drawn about increases or declines in student performance are based on the overall percent passing for the school, not whether students who passed the midterm subsequently passed the final exam. Indeed, while the conclusions refer to improved scores, only passing rates are provided. The report does not indicate the raw scores earned. Reviewers did not check every report provided, but this report raised concerns about the quality of data analysis. Either the report was not prepared with collaboration of the research department, or the report was not well circulated or critically read.
- The reports for science-unit tests did compute the total percentage passing rates correctly.

### Recommendations

A common feature in urban districts making rapid gains in student achievement is their use of statistical information. These districts use data to monitor progress, identify schools or students that are starting to slip behind, and decide on intervention strategies to bring students back up to speed and professional development to strengthen teacher skills.

*37. Anchor quarterly tests to the pacing guides and to the rigor and idiom of the state tests.*

The district has wisely invested in a process to provide formative information about student learning. Now it is time to examine the tests themselves to ensure that they meet the purpose for which they were intended. The quarterly tests can be used to monitor student progress through the curriculum and to ensure that students are working on rigorous materials for their grade level. Good performance on the quarterlies should predict good performance on state assessments. The district should consider evaluating the alignment and predicative quality of the quarterly tests.

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38. *Ensure that student performance data are analyzed and presented to address questions related to curriculum modification, professional development, and instruction/intervention.*

Student performance data are not only useful to teachers, but they also they can inform central office staff about potential areas to improve in curriculum guidance, coaching, and professional development. The district may want to consider ideas for data analysis for central office, coaches, and teachers from such resources as Nancy Love's *Designing Professional Development for Teachers of Science and Mathematics*.

State tests emphasize some objectives over others, and some objectives form an important foundation for future objectives. District curriculum leaders should use data to inform instructional staff about what to emphasize for maximum student achievement. For example, while scores are low in the measurement cluster in mathematics, this cluster has only four objective questions and one open-ended item. Student achievement rates could improve at a faster rate by concentrating efforts on other clusters on which the state places greater importance.

39. *Begin moving toward the creation of a district data warehouse that includes benchmark and state test results and user-friendly access to student performance data.*

To assist in data analysis, the district should consider the development of a data warehouse that provides data and data tools in order to allow staff and teachers to analyze results by student, classroom, *No Child Left Behind* subgroups, grade level, school, School Leadership Team, and districtwide. The warehouse should also provide the capability to track these data across multiple years to determine the long-term impact of district initiatives. Grade-level results alone do not indicate whether individual students who perform in one category at a given grade level gain or regress in their performance across grade levels.

40. *Use long-term school-by-school data to understand better the programmatic reasons for gains in the fastest-improving schools.*

When examining student achievement data and longitudinal student cohort data, the district's leadership may want to be alert to accelerated gains to determine if particular practices or systems might be shared with peers to improve systemwide achievement.

41. *Encourage greater collaboration between curriculum and research units to interpret, analyze, and present data designed to help principals understand underlying reasons for trends and implications for practice.*

The team encourages the district to take data presentations to the next level. Merely presenting the percentage of students performing at each level of the state test or the performance on quarterly tests leaves individual schools the task of analyzing which students can be grouped for interventions or which objectives appear to be in greatest

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need. Central office staff members could also indicate to school staff when they suspect that poor performance in one grade level may actually have its roots in an insufficient foundation from a previous grade level. The Newark Public Schools' research department might consider examining data documents from other Council districts prior to developing new reports. District leadership might also consider working with other Abbott districts to meet with state department representatives to rethink the type of data and the timing of data reports furnished to districts by the state.

42. *Consolidate federal categorical fund dollars earmarked for program evaluation and send them to the research and evaluation office to increase staff and build capacity.*

The district can ultimately be more productive when the results of initiatives and programs are evaluated routinely. To offset the cost of additional staffing, the team suggests that all grants and categorical evaluation dollars be consolidated to build the research department staffing and capacity. Additionally, the district can build strategic partnerships with local universities to target specific projects for evaluation by graduate students and professors.

43. *Create a calendar for regular evaluation of district programs and initiatives.*

The research department should consider developing a three- to five-year plan for evaluating district instructional initiatives and professional development. The plan should give priority to areas of student achievement with the most urgent need for improvement. The research department might want to discuss evaluation systems with school district research departments in Broward County (Fla.) and Charlotte-Mecklenburg (N.C.).

44. *Consider moving toward a Web-based or commercial service to collect, analyze, and return benchmark and quarterly test data within 48 hours for every school.*

45. *Develop an evaluation plan to accompany any new initiatives before they are rolled out.*

The evaluation of an initiative should be integral to a project, not an afterthought. Teachers should be asked to begin lesson planning with the end in mind. Projects benefit when this approach is used. The evaluation plan should go beyond process considerations to examine the results in terms of improved student achievement or improvements in classroom practices. Research department staff ought to be involved in the development of the evaluation plan to ensure that the system has the capacity to gather and analyze the required data, the staffing to meet timelines, and that the research design will produce valid and reliable results.

## **H. LOWEST-PERFORMING STUDENTS AND SCHOOLS, AND SPECIAL POPULATIONS**

Urban school systems that are seeing substantial improvement in student performance have a targeted strategy to intervene in and increase achievement in their

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lowest-performing schools and with their lowest-performing students. These school systems also have clear strategies for teaching special populations such as English language learners and students with disabilities. Such strategies may vary from city to city, but they share a number of common elements.

### Positive Findings

- The district has an extensive array of alternative school programs for students who need special settings outside the regular schools. Programs, enrolling some 1,300 students, include the Twilight program, the Middle School Alternative Program (Renaissance), Vacamas Academy, Pathways Academy, SOS Academy, and T.E.E.M. Gateway.
- The district has purchased Tier II and Tier III intervention systems for students who are slipping behind in their work.
- A Title I review conducted by the New Jersey Department of Education commended the district for sending out timely letters to parents of students who were eligible for supplemental educational services (SES) and effectively tracking the costs per student for those services through the district's Web-based system.<sup>28</sup>
- The district has 25 *Reading Recovery* teachers to serve 65 schools. The *Reading Recovery* program is used to serve the lowest-performing students.
- The district offers a placement and diagnostic assessment in reading at the beginning of the school year. Portions of the test are administered only to students falling significantly below grade-level expectations, and the results are used to guide the formation of flexible groups for remedial work.<sup>29</sup>
- The *Read 180* program is used in grades 6-8 in selected schools with large numbers of struggling readers and in all comprehensive high schools.
- Guided reading is used to help students with differing levels of reading skills.
- Math coaches are assigned to the district's lowest-performing schools.
- The district has an extensive written policy for providing individualized plans for students performing below grade level.
- Bilingual and English-as-a-second-language (ESL) teachers follow the same core content curriculum as the teachers in the general program.<sup>30</sup> The district has

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<sup>28</sup> A letter dated March 16, 2006 from Governor Jon S. Corzine.

<sup>29</sup> Language Arts Literacy Assessment, page 118.

<sup>30</sup> The Council of the Great City Schools did not review Newark's bilingual education program comprehensively. The Council typically devotes separate teams and a separate process when looking specifically at its members' bilingual or ESL programs.

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- bilingual education (in Spanish, Portuguese, and French), ESL, and world languages programs.
- The district’s English language learner (ELL) program, serving about 3,800—the majority of whom speak Spanish and Portuguese—appears strongly aligned with state requirements and ELL students are making progress on state tests faster than their counterparts statewide.
  - The district uses Harcourt’s *Trofeos*, the Spanish version of its *Trophies* series, in grades K-5 for reading instruction; McDougal Littell’s *Bridges* series with ELL supplemental kits for reading instruction in grades 6-12; and Prentice Hall’s *Progreso con las Matematicas*, the Spanish version of *Connected Math*, for general math review and remedial instruction.
  - The district trains its teachers on the use of the sheltered instruction observation protocols to assess and monitor student language acquisition. The district generally provides professional development for teachers in strategies for effectively teaching English language learners.
  - The district appears to have well-defined programming for its students who are hearing impaired, autistic, behaviorally disabled, cognitively impaired, learning disabled, and multiply disabled, as well as for disabled preschool students.<sup>31</sup>
  - The district’s special education program has Spanish-speaking and Portuguese-speaking staff, a very unusual feature.
  - Some 40 schools offer supplemental educational services (SES) under the federal Title I program. The district itself uses Abington school as its SES provider.<sup>32</sup>
  - The district has developed several methods to inform parents of eligible students about both the district’s and private providers’ options.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, the district has provided information about these options in four languages—English, Spanish, Portuguese, and French. The district also has a detailed compilation of New Jersey-approved SES providers.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> The Council of the Great City Schools did not review Newark’s special education program. The Council typically devotes separate teams and a separate process when looking specifically at its members’ special education programs.

<sup>32</sup> Letter from State of New Jersey, Office of Title Accountability, and I Program Planning June 15, 2005.

<sup>33</sup> The state commended the district for its timely notification to parents about supplemental services in a letter to the superintendent dated March 16, 2006, following a Collective Assessment and Planning for Achievement (CAPA) review.

<sup>34</sup> New Jersey-approved SES providers (not all of whom service Newark) include: A to Z In-Home Tutoring, Abington Avenue School, Academia.net, Achieve3000, American Home Tutoring, ATS Educational Consulting Services, Babbage Net School, Brainfuse Online Instruction, Bright Sky Learning, Catapult Online, Center for Health Psychology, Center for Literacy, Champion Learning Center, Chenault’s Taekwondo and the Learners Academy for Children, Club Z!, Communities in Schools, Community Tutoring Services/Fischetti Consulting, Data Friendly, Edgewater Multicultural Center,



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- The district listed the per-pupil Title I allocation for SES as \$1,946 in 2006-07, a relatively high amount that should enable a large number of students to be served.
- According to the *Supplemental Services Site Summary Report* furnished to the team, 4,629 elementary school students signed up to participate in SES by May of 2006.<sup>35</sup>
- Of the 4,629 students who signed up for SES, only 3,289 actually attended SES programs. The district's SES participation rate, based on an eligible population of 18,564, is about 17.7 percent—a rate similar to the rates in other major cities.
- The district sets aside the equivalent of 20 percent of its Title I allocation to fund its choice and supplemental services efforts under *No Child Left Behind*.
- The district serves about 12,000 students each day in its After-school Youth Development Program (ASYDP), and about 8,000 students in its summer school program.

### Areas of Concern

- School staff members do not always appear to understand the system of reading interventions that the district has set up to work with students having trouble in this area.
- District evaluations of the *Read 180* program, one of the system's main intervention programs, appear to show implementation problems and mixed results. The program has shown gains on the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) but *Read 180* shows no significant effect overall on the state assessments. (The evaluations showed some gains among the lowest performing students, however.)
- It is not clear how well the placement and diagnostic assessment the district uses relates to the state assessments.<sup>36</sup> The team saw no evidence that an analysis of this relationship had been conducted.

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Education Advance, Education Station, Education Elevation, Educational Information and Resource Center, Essex County Educational Services Commission, Sylvan Learning Center, Excel Learning Systems, Failure Free Reading, Huntington Learning Center, I CAN Learn, Innovative Educational Programs, International Youth Organization (IYO), Ironbound Community Corporation, Kaplan K12 Learning Services, KidZ University Childcare and Educational Tutoring Services, KLC School Partnerships, Knowledge is Power Learning Center, Kumon Math and Reading Center, LITE Community Development Corporation, My Tutor 24, NCLB Tutors, Library Co-op, New Community Corporation, New Jersey Points of Knowledge, New Jersey Public Broadcasting Center, Newton Learning (Edison), Paterson Police Athletic League, Platform Learning, Power Communicators, Protestant Community Centers, Scharf Systems, Alternatives Unlimited, St. Peter the Apostle High School, Studentnest, The Eldridge Overton School of Excellence, The Enrichment Center, St James Social Services Corporation, The Learning Curve Education Center, The Work-Family Connection, Trail Blazers Camps, Union Chapel Community Development Corporation, Urban League of Essex County, Vacamas Programs for Youth, Urban Youth Development Corporation, Winsor Learning, and Write Angle.

<sup>35</sup> Based on the district's Cayen Tracking System and reported to the New Jersey Department of Education in the Title I Performance Report.

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- The district has a series of math interventions for students who are behind academically, but these interventions do not appear to be used consistently.
- A large number of alternatively-certified teachers are often placed in the poorest-performing schools in the district. The district did not show the team any systematic program for supporting and monitoring these new teachers beyond the regular induction program.
- District is in its third year of “district improvement” status under *No Child Left Behind* for not meeting districtwide targets in reading and math among all subgroups. The district is also accountable under a state system that is separate from that under the federal law.
- About two-thirds of the district’s enrollment is eligible for federal Title I services. Approximately 60 of the district’s schools are Title I-eligible. Nearly all of these schools have not met AYP targets or are on hold (meaning that they are in sanction but have made AYP for one year.)
- Most schools not making AYP targets under *No Child Left Behind* fail to make them because of reading achievement, although a substantial number of schools have not made state math targets.
- Parents who wish to transfer their children to higher-performing schools under the provisions of *No Child Left Behind* find few choices because of the limited alternatives. As a result, very few students exercise the choice option.
- The SES programs offered through the district by *Compass Learning* and some private providers appear to be producing minimal or mixed results, according to district evaluations. The district’s 2005-06 evaluation of *Compass Learning*, for instance, indicated that SES program participants were making gains in math on state tests, compared with non-participants, but few gains in language arts.<sup>37</sup> There may be a problem with how well the program’s reading materials are aligned with the rigor measured on the state assessments, or a problem with program implementation. The district and the private programs typically begin in November and run two to three times a week for several weeks. Attendance at sessions ranges from about 60 to 70 percent.
- The district has used the full range of available options for its schools in corrective action and restructuring status under *No Child Left Behind*, including replacement of principals, reorganizing staff, replacing some personnel, providing

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<sup>36</sup> The placement and diagnostic assessment is used in conjunction with the Harcourt *Trophies* program to place students in appropriate instructional levels in reading.

<sup>37</sup> Many of the students who took advantage of the opportunity to participate in the *Compass Learning* after-school program had pretest proficiency scores that were higher than that of non-SES students. Where pretest differences could be controlled, SES participants significantly outperformed non-SES cohorts in grade 4 language arts and math and in grade 5 mathematics. Participants averaged about 17 hours of log-in time on the system.

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professional development, and implementing new interventions. The district has generally not selected charter schools, contracted with a private entity, or selected state-takeover as NCLB restructuring options. (The district is already a state takeover district, however.)

- The district generally gives a positive rating to the technical assistance that it receives from the state for its school-improvement schools.
- Title I funding to the schools in the district is based on a single, uniform allocation of \$700 per student, without regard to highly concentrated need that might require additional resources.
- The district's special education placement rate of 17.4 percent is relatively high, compared with other major cities, which average about 12-13 percent.
- The district has taken a variety of steps to provide additional resources and oversight to its low-performing schools. It has invested in math coaches, reallocated math and literacy resource-teacher coordinators, reviewed and revised schedules to comply with district-mandated time allocations, and provided fiscal oversight and approval of requisitions in these schools. But, the district did not present the team with a clear strategy for addressing the instructional needs of its lowest-performing schools. Expectations for coaches and coordinators were not clearly stated nor were there clearly-articulated processes presented for how all program components were to be monitored for effectiveness.
- The numbers of students participating in afterschool or other extended-time programs to boost academic skills are small compared to the need.
- The district does not appear to track individual student performance to determine if the policies in place to address the problem of students' performing below grade level are effective.
- Every school is charged with using the district's policy about discipline infractions. The policy calls for a school-discipline committee to develop a plan for positive, preventive disciplinary measures. Each school is also responsible for staff development and parent training on the plan. The result may be differing applications of the student code of conduct and differing suspension rates by school. The practice also results in considerable duplication of effort.

### Recommendations

46. *Require all schools in school improvement 3 status or higher to get approval for school-based professional development, as well as approval for major purchases to acquire materials or hire consultants.*

The lowest-performing schools are in need of more targeted support that, in effect, should reduce the latitude of these schools to pursue strategies independently of the

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school district's efforts. In addition, attention should be paid to reviewing professional development programs in schools with a substantial need of improvement. Reviewers should be extremely knowledgeable in data analysis, curriculum, and instruction, and be able to examine school programs for alignment with district goals and planned follow-up activities. Schools can be given more latitude when they show greater gains and higher performance.

47. *Work with the union to create financial and other incentives to attract the best teachers to work in the lowest-performing schools.*
48. *Revamp the hiring and recruitment timeline to contract with teachers sooner in the calendar year.*
49. *Develop sample protocols at the central-office level for scheduling classes and instructional time in schools.*

Even though the district has set instructional time requirements in reading and mathematics, many classrooms do not adhere to those requirements. Students who have fallen far behind by secondary school also have particular scheduling needs. The team recognizes that a "one size fits all" approach can lead to unforeseen problems. But there is no need for each school to have to struggle with how to schedule its day. The central office, in collaboration with several principals and SLT staff, should consider providing sample class and instructional schedules that address challenges faced by school staff.

50. *Consider strategies for boosting the overall participation of the district's lowest-performing students in extended-time programs or supplemental services programs focused on raising achievement.*
51. *Reconsider the use of Compass Learning for SES if reading evaluations continue to show weak results.*

The district has invested substantially in *Compass Learning* for its Title I supplemental services program, but evaluations indicate minimal movement in reading. Math results show more promise. Now that there are data to determine if performance has improved on state tests, the district should make a data-driven decision about retaining the program or redirecting those funds.

### **I. EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND SCHOOLS**

It is often difficult for urban school districts to improve everything at once. The districts experiencing success in improving student achievement did not take on the entire system at once. Instead, these districts started their reforms at the early elementary grades and worked up to the middle and high school grades.

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### Positive Findings

- The school district has 141 preschool sites (106 off campus and 35 at school sites) with a total of 500 classrooms that serves approximately 6,000 pupils, a larger program than exists in many cities.
- *Creative Curriculum for Preschool*, which is used for social and physical development and as the foundation for language arts, is filled with strong examples of effective teaching practices. The program is implemented in district and provider preschools.
- The prekindergarten *Everyday Mathematics* program is being implemented in classrooms for four-year-olds.
- A letter from the state's Office of Early Childhood Education, dated September 14, 2006, cites the collaboration between Newark's Office of Early Childhood and the Office of Bilingual Education in supporting English language learners.
- Each school has a parent liaison to provide outreach to the community.
- The district has a large, inclusive full-day pre-K program for all three- and four-year-olds, with an extended day program as well.
- The Newark school district provides professional development to nondistrict pre-K program providers.
- The Newark schools have done observations of 45 preschool classrooms using the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale—Revised (ECERS-R), which rates 43 items on a seven-point scale. The school district also measures early literacy components of preschool classrooms using the Supports for Early Literacy Assessment (SELA) instrument, which has a five-point scale. Between 2002-03 and 2005-06, the total overall average of the 20 components of SELA improved from 2.75 to 3.29.
- The district has a plan, drafted in 2006, to evaluate pre-K programs and to establish a database that can track student performance in these programs.<sup>38</sup> Comprehensive data on the overall effectiveness of the program on student achievement and the longer-term effects of the program on student attainment in later grades is only beginning to emerge.<sup>39</sup>
- The Newark schools also used the five-point Likert scale Preschool Classroom Mathematics Inventory (PCMI) to examine the district's preschool mathematics program. On the PCMI, one point indicates minimal evidence, and five points

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<sup>38</sup> Source: Office of Planning, Evaluation and Testing, "Early Childhood Data Management."

<sup>39</sup> A recent evaluation of Abbott preschool programs statewide by the National Institute for Early Childhood Research at Rutgers University indicated that substantial gains occurred in language, literacy, and mathematics, and that the gains were sustained through the kindergarten year.

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indicate that all features are evident. The total overall average score was 2.07 points.

- According to the Newark Public Schools *Gifted and Talented Regulations and Procedures* letter to administrators dated August 28, 2006, from the supervisor of the Office of Gifted and Talented, gifted students must be identified and served at their own learning levels in every classroom and in every school.

### Areas of Concern

- There is a pre-K curriculum framework in the *Creative Curriculum*, but this framework consists of a compendium of ideas by content areas without clear sequencing, materials, or tools. The curriculum objectives listed in the compendium are open to interpretation.<sup>40</sup> And the framework devotes only seven pages to the concept of phonological awareness. Moreover, there is no systematic program within the curriculum that ensures that every child in every classroom receives systematic phonological instruction to help him or her be more successful in the elementary reading program.
- No clear rationale is given for turning the K-5 schools into K-8 schools in the middle of the school improvement cycle.
- The district's pre-K programs do not appear to be consistent in quality, and staff qualifications for the programs are uneven.
- The current gifted and talented student program is ill defined. Its reliance on in-class differentiations and inclusion does not ensure that students receive appropriate services. Moreover, the district has not evaluated the program to determine its results.
- While ECERS-R scores improved between 2002-03 and 2005-06, one can also see by examining the results of the 45 preschool observations with ECERS-R, SELA, and PCMI that there may be future problems in areas of vocabulary, language development, and such math foundations as one-to-one correspondence, estimation, use of mathematical terminology and reflection on mathematical problems, measurement, classification, concepts of geometry, and spatial relations. The team did not see any information to indicate how or if the district used these findings to modify professional development for teachers and principals, or to provide targeted support in classrooms where weak practices were observed.

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<sup>40</sup> An example can be seen in Objective 38: *Hears and discriminates the sounds of language*. Within the Developmental Continuum for ages 3-5 that states: "Plays with words, sounds, and rhymes; recognizes and invents rhymes and repetitive phrases; notices words that begin the same way; hears and repeats separate sounds in words; plays with sounds to create new words."

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- As an Abbott district, the Newark school system is required to serve 90 percent of the eligible population with a full-day preschool program, but the school system has not attained that benchmark yet.

### Recommendations

52. *Once teachers are well grounded in techniques of good instruction in reading and math, revisit the gifted and talented program and provide all teachers with training in the use of gifted strategies, and move to expand the program.*

The Council does have member school districts that have made great strides with their gifted and talented programs over the last several years. For example, the Columbus school district identifies 12,000 students as being gifted and talented in four areas: superior cognitive, specific academic, creative thinking, and visual/performing arts. In addition, the Columbus district screens every student in the system. Staff members from the district's gifted and talented department ensure that the district's curriculum guides have extensions for gifted students as a way to incorporate the gifted and talented program into the overall school curriculum. The district also tracks state test results of gifted students in order to assess how well their programs are working.

Another example can be found in the Norfolk school district, which reallocates resources to provide on-site support for gifted students. The Newark school leadership may want to contact Dr. Melinda Boone, the Norfolk school system's chief academic officer, and Francie Nolan, the supervisor of the Columbus school system's gifted and talented program, for further information about the two districts' gifted and talented programs.

The Council's team recommends that the Newark school district rethink and expand its gifted and talented program. The team suggests the following steps—

- Form a task force that reports to the Deputy Superintendent to evaluate the current program, including:
  - The identification process
  - Actual classroom implementation of differentiated instruction
  - Achievement results
  - Teacher certification to work with gifted students in the classroom setting
  - Parent perceptions of the program
- On the basis of the results of this assessment, investigate other successful programs in urban school systems across the country that might inform changes in the Newark system to better meet the needs of gifted and talented students and to address parent concerns more effectively.

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- Review the use of other testing instruments, such as the Naglieri, to ensure that the Newark school district is identifying its gifted and talented students appropriately and comprehensively.
- Determine how funding might be reallocated to achieve better program design and implementation.
- As curriculum is designed and tightened, ensure that extensions are written explicitly into it to address the needs of gifted students.
- Ensure that program evaluation is planned in order to determine the success of program changes.

53. *Develop or contract out the development of materials and tools to help implement the Creative Curriculum, ensuring that it includes a clear articulation to the K-2 program and that the meaning of each objective is sufficiently clarified to avoid misinterpretation.*

54. *Evaluate the extent to which the pre-K curriculum supports preparation for kindergarten and first grade by type of program (contract providers vs. district providers)*

### J. MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOLS

While many urban school systems that see gains in student performance focus initially on their elementary schools, they do not ignore their middle and high schools. There is no national consensus on how to improve high schools yet, particularly in the nation's urban areas. Still, the faster-moving districts have put a number of strategies in place to ensure that students who did not learn the basic skills in elementary school do so before they graduate from high school.

#### Positive Findings

- Newark has improved its graduation rates from 60.8 percent to 73.6 percent, according to the state's definitions and data.
- The Newark school district was awarded a \$14 million *Striving Readers* grant to improve secondary school achievement.<sup>41</sup>
- District high schools offer an extensive array of career-academy programs, including college preparatory history, allied health sciences, construction trades,

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<sup>41</sup> The project will be done in conjunction with the National Urban Alliance and carried out in the following district schools: Burnet Street, Hawkins Street, Maple Street, Chancellor Avenue, Fifteenth Avenue, Thirteenth Avenue, Marin, Bragaw, Miller Street, McKinley, Horton, Mt. Vernon, Dayton Street, Avon Street, Ridge Street, Newton Street, Hernandez, Hawthorne Avenue, Academy of Vocational Careers, Barringer High, Barringer Success Academy, Central High, East Side High, Shabazz High, West Side, and West Side Success Academy.



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aerospace/aviation, finance, technology, and business administrative services. The district does not appear to use economic or job forecasting data to determine its offerings, but the programs have often received national and state recognition.

- The district is required under Abbott regulations to use a small learning communities strategy organized around career/academic themes in the reform of its secondary schools. The Newark school district has accompanied the small learning communities program with a professional development component.
- The school district has developed a number of school-to-career workshops and materials for its secondary school students.<sup>42</sup>
- The district and state have two routes toward high school graduation: the regular exit process and the Standards Review Assessment (SRA).<sup>43</sup> About half the district's graduates in 2006 exited the system *via* the SRA route. Apparently, the original intent of the SRA was to provide a way for students statewide who met very specific criteria used by the Child Study Team to demonstrate proficiency. This was mainly for students who were deemed "test phobic." Over time, the SRA was also used for limited English proficient students and many special education students. Beginning in 1991, the New Jersey administrative code was changed to include all students in the SRA program who did not pass the HSPT. The program shifted, therefore, from an alternate way for specific students to demonstrate proficiency to a program that was open to nearly all students. Beginning with introduction of HSPA in 2002, all students who did not score "proficient" on one or more tests were included in the SRA process. The district recognizes that the state will phase out this alternative graduation process, and has instituted mandatory tutoring, summer enrichment, and other programs for students failing HSPA.
- The district offers a large alternative school program and "twilight" program to address individual student needs.
- The Newark school district pays for PSAT examinations for all eligible students.
- The Newark school district offers a three-to-four-week summer enrichment program for incoming ninth-graders who were not proficient or advanced on the Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment (GEPA). In addition, the district requires all ninth- and 10th-grade students who score below the benchmark on the SPA in either language arts literacy or mathematics to attend mandatory tutoring sessions beyond the school day.

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<sup>42</sup> Examples: "Mapping Your High School Education," "Nuts and Bolts: A Survival Guide for High School Interns, Parents and Employers on Work-Based Learning," "School-to-Career: The Game of Life Choices," "School-to-Career: A Road to Success," and other documents.

<sup>43</sup> The SPA consists of a variety of attendance requirements, tutoring sessions, a minimum score on the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA), and a summer enrichment institute.

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- High schools offer one or two-week summer-bridge programs for entering ninth-graders before the beginning of the school year. Participating students receive an introduction to high school subject areas and complete a project.
- Newark students have the opportunity to participate in summer career experiences.
- Ninth-grade classes are limited to no more than 24 students.
- High school department chairs have allotted time to support teachers within their content areas with data tools and instructional support. Department chairs are also available to assist new teachers.
- The High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) 2002-2005 data table provided by the district indicates that math performance by general-education juniors has improved in the past three years in every high school.

### **Areas of Concern**

- The district does not appear to have goals for improving graduation rates among students on the HSPA route, although numbers are increasing. The district currently graduates more students *via* the SRA route than do other New Jersey districts.
- There does not appear to be a definable pipeline for moving middle school students into an Advanced Placement (AP) track.
- Of the 1,128 students (about half of the senior class) taking the SAT college admission test, combined math/reading scores averaged 764, which is more than 200 points below the state average. A very small number of students take AP tests and fewer than 10 percent achieve a score of 3 or higher.
- It is unclear from the action plan given to the Council team how the strategy of small learning communities in School Leadership Team II will move beyond making structural changes to affecting student achievement more broadly. The record of small learning communities suggests that this strategy—on its own—is insufficient to raise academic performance.
- The district is experiencing gang and violence problems that create discipline issues for teachers and staff.
- Parents interviewed by the team reported that their students receive little help with college applications from the schools.

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- Under Abbott regulations,<sup>44</sup> the district has instituted small learning communities at the secondary school level to improve personalization and engagement. The site-visit team did not see a consistent difference in classroom work in high schools organized into small learning communities that would indicate a particular school focus in core classrooms or an emphasis on engaging students in challenging work.
- While computers were in most high school classrooms, the site-visit team found that most classroom computers were not in use. In one classroom where the teacher was attempting to use the computers, the network was down.
- The district has begun evaluating how successful its enrichment programs have been in preparing students for academic success and proficiency on the HSPA.<sup>45</sup> The evaluations to date have indicated a positive effect for students who had scored the most poorly on the SPA10, but a negative effect for students who had scored relatively well on the SPA10. District evaluations indicated that there were problems with program implementation and alignment, tutor training and attendance, incentives for student attendance, school input into the program, and record keeping.
- According to the *High School Resource Guide* of August 2006, any student who fails a required core course must repeat the course in summer school. The team did not see any research on the impact of this policy on dropout rates or subsequent pass rates.
- In the HSPA 2002-2005 data table provided by the district, passing rates of general-education juniors were consistently high in language arts literacy at four high schools (Arts, Science, Technology, and University). In contrast, passing rates were consistently below 50 percent at three high schools (Barringer, Central, and Renaissance). The mathematics passing rates for general-education juniors were lower than for language. Only two high schools had consistently high mathematics scores, whereas the passing rates in mathematics at seven high schools were consistently below 50 percent.

### Recommendations

55. *Implement a positive behavior program districtwide, starting at the earliest grades.*

In visiting school campuses, the site-visit team found some schools where students were clearly following routines that supported academic environment. However, this was not always the case. One school had substantial levels of disruptions and very poor classroom management. The team suggests researching, selecting, and implementing a positive behavior program and involving parents and the community to create a consistent, predictable system for dealing with disruptive students.

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<sup>44</sup> NJAC.61:10A-3.3

<sup>45</sup> As initially designed, students were to be tutored by a college tutor or district teacher, and to receive additional support from NovaNET, an online computer curriculum.

## **Raising Student Achievement in the Newark Public Schools**

### *56. Require participation in district or other summer school and afterschool programs participation for students failing the GEPA.*

Students lacking an academic foundation find it increasingly difficult to handle the concepts and skills required at the high school level. Failing the GEPA should set a series of requirements in motion, including—

- An examination of interventions in place for that student during the year
- An analysis of academic areas in which intervention is needed
- A consideration of student motivation and other factors that appear to impede student academic progress in order to seek possible solutions
- The development of programs beyond school hours to provide intense academic support specifically aligned with the student’s academic profile.

The Council team supports the district in requiring students to attend an intensive academic program. A system to track student progress and a program evaluation need to be included in the initiative. The plan also needs to include a system to deal with students who choose not to or who are unable to attend these required programs. Programs must also be evaluated for their effectiveness and continuously improved based on the evaluation results.

### *57. Reach out to parents to encourage them to get their children to attend summer and afterschool programs.*

Once the district examines its summer and afterschool programs to ensure that they are effective for those who attend, the district can use this information to reach out to parents who want the best for their children.

### *58. Review, upgrade, and articulate the reading, math, and science programs used with students in grades 5-8, so that they link with the skills that students will need to achieve in core courses in the ninth grade.*

The district has already taken several steps that indicate it recognizes the importance of the ninth grade. The district has limited class sizes to provide opportunities for teachers to address student needs. It has implemented summer programs and tutorials that utilize time beyond the school day. Student performance in a given grade level, however, is dependent on the student having the foundation needed to study ever more complex concepts and skills. As the district revamps its curriculum documents, the team suggests that the curriculum writers pay closer attention to introducing the knowledge and skills in grades 5 through 8 to ensure that students will be ready to handle the more challenging work in high school.

## Raising Student Achievement in the Newark Public Schools

The research of John Easton and Eileen Allensworth on the Chicago schools<sup>46</sup> has yielded an on-track indicator that is able to predict high school graduation based on student performance in the ninth grade. Their research indicates that accumulating a sufficient number of credits to be promoted to 10th grade without failing more than one semester in a core subject area is a better predictor of high school graduation than eighth-grade test scores or students' background characteristics. Ninth grade, then, is a high-leverage period for the district in preparing students to enter 10th grade.

59. *Backmap course content and rigor from grade 12 down to at least the sixth grade to ensure that students have participated in coursework that is sufficiently difficult that they graduate with the skills to gain entry into a competitive college or university or other postsecondary career-training program.*

While the district wants its students to be successful on state tests, the goal of education reaches beyond state-test parameters to what students will need to be successful in the next phase of their lives. The team urges the district to set goals for improved participation in advanced courses. Students taking AP courses should be expected to earn a score of 3 or better on AP exams. High school coursework should also prepare students to gain entry into postsecondary programs.

When revamping the curriculum, curriculum writers can consider objectives that encompass and go beyond state standards. The district should plan for a middle school pipeline that prepares students for more rigorous high school coursework.

60. *Expand “Advancement via Individual Determination” (AVID) implementation in the district’s middle and high schools to build a pipeline for students to participate in more advanced courses and college prep classes, and work with partners to establish PSAT/SAT preparation courses.*
61. *Revamp secondary school counseling programs and use PSAT results to encourage more rigorous patterns of taking core courses at the high school level.*
62. *Assess the rigor of current secondary school courses and then boost that rigor with better materials and professional development for teachers and training for administrators in monitoring and supporting higher expectations.*
63. *Ensure that end-of-course exams in core courses are aligned with the HSPA—to better assess content mastery.*
64. *Explore having the Newark school district participate in New Jersey’s advanced diploma project in conjunction with ACHIEVE.*
65. *Establish a regular and thorough evaluation of the small schools and small learning community initiatives for their impact on student achievement.*

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<sup>46</sup> Allensworth, Elaine and Easton, John. “The On-Track Indicator as a Predictor of High School Graduation”, University of Chicago, June 2005.

## **Raising Student Achievement in the Newark Public Schools**

As the district moves forward in implementing small learning communities, the urgency of monitoring student achievement is as important as monitoring structural changes and student services and engagement.

### CHAPTER 3. SYNOPSIS AND DISCUSSION

The leadership of the Newark Public Schools is committed to developing a capable, knowledgeable, and well-educated work force for the community. The district has committed substantial resources and has developed a coherent vision for literacy and mathematics instruction. It has provided extensive professional development and has placed literacy coaches and math teacher-leaders in schools to help principals and teachers turn this vision into reality. And it has put an extensive array of other instructional reforms into place that have improved student achievement.

Most recently, however, gains in student achievement—particularly in reading—have been leveling off. The Council’s team believes that this slowdown in achievement gains is the result of nine factors—

- An overall sluggishness in state reading scores that Newark simply reflects
- A reading program that has been in effect for less than two years, compared with a math program that has been in place for at least five years
- Lack of deep alignment of the district’s curriculum objectives with state and college readiness standards and assessments
- Irregular implementation of district reading and math programs
- Weak monitoring of curriculum and program implementation
- Evidence of weak rigor in classroom work by teachers and students
- Low expectations of student attainment
- An accountability system that is too new to have produced results
- Insufficient use of data-driven decisions.

These factors did not emerge just in the last several years, but their existence may have finally caught up with the system. The team believes that the superintendent’s early instructional gains were produced by focusing on low-achieving children who may not have received much instructional attention in the past. This initial low-hanging instructional fruit has now been picked, and the less obvious—even more difficult—academic work remains to be done.

The Council of the Great City Schools’ Strategic Support Team proposes a number of steps to move the district forward.

## Raising Student Achievement in the Newark Public Schools

The *first step* involves a political challenge and calls for rallying the city—with a sense of urgency—around a common and shared strategy for raising student achievement. It is not clear that all the major constituency groups in the city are pulling in the same direction in pursuit of the school district’s reform. The research is very clear, however, that a necessary precondition for educational progress is a strong consensus among school and community leaders about the direction of educational reforms. Progress is harder to create and maintain when the community is fractured about its own theory of action. Moreover, gains are strongest when these theories of action are defined around how to improve classroom instruction. Classroom instruction, however, is rarely if ever changed by altering organizational or governing structures. The Newark community will have to get by these issues and set aside any divisions over them if it wants to improve student achievement.

The Council encourages the community and its leaders to speak out more aggressively in favor of reading more books, playing more family games, turning off the TV, and marshalling an army of citizen tutors to work with students after school.

The *second step* involves having the school district be far more explicit and expansive about where it is going and how it expects to get there. The district currently relies on various *No Child Left Behind* targets and the accumulated and disparate goals of its various departments to articulate what it wants to achieve. But the district should not be setting its ambitions around the lowest possible increment of gain under NCLB. The Council urges the district and the community to think in broader strokes and be much clearer and more ambitious about what it wants to accomplish going forward.

The *third step* involves having the district tighten up on how it holds its people accountable for results. The Newark school system has many excellent staff members and teachers—much stronger, in fact, than the public acknowledges or appreciates. The strength, commitment, and skills of these individuals give the district the capacity it needs to take the next important steps in its reforms. This pool of talent is critically important, because many urban school systems facing much more difficult challenges than does Newark lack the personnel to move their systems forward. This is not a problem in Newark, but the district does need to hold its staff members more responsible for the results they get—without being unduly punitive. Staff members will rise to the occasion; they are very good.

The *fourth step* requires the district to strengthen its curriculum and instructional system, and ensure that its reforms penetrate into the classrooms. This action will involve more closely aligning the curriculum and the district’s reading and math programs with the state standards and assessments; raising expectations for the rigor of classroom instruction and the performance of students; ensuring more faithful implementation of the district’s programs; and building the foundation for more advanced work grade-by-grade and eventual admission to, and success in, a postsecondary education or training setting. Taking these steps will require both long-term and incremental work, but both types of work are essential to improving classroom instruction in Newark.



## **Raising Student Achievement in the Newark Public Schools**

The district might best take this step, in the opinion of the team, by articulating the curriculum at each grade level with state-level standards and college-readiness expectations. Rather than having each teacher interpret the New Jersey standards in her or his own way, the district should carefully introduce these standards and train teachers on their implications for classroom instruction. This may mean putting textbook material in different order, supplementing textbook materials, or harmonizing programs.

This work could be aided by using an enhanced version of the district's pacing guides as a foundation. The pacing guides should indicate how long to spend on particular chapters in the adopted textbooks, which objectives require more time, where textbooks need to be supplemented, and how and when concepts studied earlier in the school year are reviewed. The pacing guides, moreover, should direct the work of coaches, the provision of professional development, and the monitoring of curriculum implementation.

The district has selected quality programs in reading and math, but has implemented them in irregular fashion. The district might conduct its own investigation into why this is the case. Teachers and principals may not fully understand the programs or how they are meant to be implemented; there may be important concerns that principals and teachers have about some aspects of the programs; there may be need for more targeted professional development; or there may simply be need for tighter monitoring of program implementation and support. Students also may lack the foundation for handling upper-level work without additional help.

This observation extends to implementation of instructional strategies. For example, in many schools visited, principals indicated that they were focused on differentiated instruction. But the site-visit team found most classrooms using whole-group instruction with most, if not all, students engaged in the same assignment using the same materials—much of which was not very challenging intellectually.

Classroom observations also showed that most principals were monitoring superficial classroom-instructional activities, but were not monitoring curriculum implementation or instructional rigor systematically. In essence, no one was really charged with making sure that students in every classroom were working on essential objectives at a challenging level. And no one was really watching to ensure that programs were being implemented faithfully, or that implementation problems were being reviewed and resolved systematically. In some ways, the district's reforms are stronger and more coherent in the central office than they are in the SLTs or the schools.

The Council of the Great City Schools' Strategic Support Team also noted low expectations for student achievement among those we interviewed, although we understand the current situation has improved vastly over several years ago. These low expectations could be tracked down through the classrooms, where teachers were working hard but students were rarely engaged fully with the material or questioned about how they synthesized it. For instance, student writing obviously is a clear focus of the schools and was amply displayed in classrooms, but—particularly at the secondary

## Raising Student Achievement in the Newark Public Schools

level—this writing often reflected rote rather formulaic construction that showed little application or synthesis of concepts. The challenge facing the Newark schools on this front is not unique to the district but is common to urban schools across the country.

The *fifth step* involves having the district pull its professional development system together and give it definition and direction. Because professional development presently is fractured, it is not yielding the kind of results that might be expected from the investments that the district is making in it.

The *sixth step* involves strengthening the district's use of data to improve instruction. The team noted that instructional decisions are not always data-driven and programs are not always evaluated for instructional effectiveness. In its efforts to move forward, the district appears to put greater priority on new initiatives than on perfecting the ones already in place. The evidence for this can be seen in how infrequently the district evaluates its programs or uses the results to fine-tune its tactics. The Council proposes in this report to expand the research department in order to better assess the effects of the district's reforms. Developing a data warehouse could also make the district's data more readily accessible to teachers and staff, and encourage greater reliance on data to make instructional decisions.

The *final step* proposed by the team is to develop a more convincing strategy for improving the high schools. They are simply not producing the results that citizens should expect, and there is little evidence to suggest that small learning communities are sufficient to raise student achievement, although they can help keep kids in school. The district will need to improve the overall quality of its courses, spur better course-taking choices, put greater emphasis on ninth-grade transitions, and step up the pace of reforms at this level.

In taking the next steps forward, Newark Public Schools can be proud of the many programs that it has put in place, the dedication displayed by its hardworking leaders and staff, and the academic progress that it has made. The progress has been substantial. As the district takes the next steps in its reforms, the public should be assured that the school system has the capacity to develop schools of choice and emerge as the best urban school district in the nation.

**APPENDIX A. SCHOOL-BY-SCHOOL PROGRESS**

## Raising Student Achievement in the Newark Public Schools

### APPENDIX A. SCHOOL-BY-SCHOOL PROGRESS

#### Language Arts—General Education—Grade 4

School	2005 Percent Proficient	2006 Percent Proficient	2005-06 Growth	SI Status 2006-07 <sup>47</sup>
Ann Street	97.9	99.0	1.1	Ok
Burnet Street	54.5	57.9	3.3	Year 5-H
Cleveland	60.7	61.5	0.8	Year 2-H
Martin Luther King	33.3	42.2	8.9	Year 5-H
Eighteenth Avenue	54.1	30.0	-24.1	Year 3
Hawkins Street	76.7	62.5	-14.2	Year 4
Lafayette Street	92.3	98.2	5.9	Ok
Newton Street	87.5	100.0	12.5	Year 6
Oliver Street	89.6	93.3	3.7	Year 3
Quitman Street	70.9	72.0	1.1	Year 3
South Street	60.6	80.8	20.2	Year 3-H
Sussex Avenue	51.2	68.4	17.2	Year 4
Warren Street	70.0	73.9	3.9	Year 4
Wilson Avenue	84.6	80.3	-4.3	Year 1
<b>SLT 1</b>	<b>74.9</b>	<b>77.3</b>	<b>2.4</b>	
Avon Avenue	41.5	46.9	5.4	Year 6
Belmont-Runyon	52.7	35.4	-17.3	Year 3-H
Bragaw	54.3	29.6	-24.7	Year 3-H
Chancellor Avenue	73.0	62.7	-10.3	Year 4
Dayton Street	28.1	48.3	20.2	Year 5-H
G.W. Carver	41.3	49.3	8.0	Year 6
Hawthorne Avenue	60.0	43.2	-16.8	Year 4
L.A. Spencer	69.0	64.6	-4.4	Year 4
Madison	70.5	47.5	-23.0	Year 2
Maple Avenue	54.9	52.4	-2.5	Year 6
Miller Street	61.3	53.1	-8.2	Year 5
Peshine Avenue	77.5	67.2	-10.3	Year 4
<b>SLT 3</b>	<b>58.2</b>	<b>50.8</b>	<b>-7.3</b>	
Abington	100.0	98.7	-1.3	Year 1
Branch Brook	94.4	90.0	-4.4	Year 1-H
Broadway	53.3	41.9	-11.4	Year 4
E.A. Flagg	84.8	60.9	-23.9	Year 6
William Horton	51.8	64.4	12.9	Year 5-H
Elliott	72.9	64.7	-8.2	Year 5-H
First Avenue	98.5	93.1	-5.4	Year 1
Franklin	78.6	62.3	-16.3	Year 2
McKinley	96.3	66.7	-29.6	Year 2
Rafael Hernandez	79.3	70.8	-8.5	Year 6

<sup>47</sup> Source: Preliminary School Improvement Status Summary (SY 06/07)

## Raising Student Achievement in the Newark Public Schools

Ridge Street	85.7	70.9	-14.8	Year 1-H
Roberto Clemente	84.5	96.2	11.7	Year 3-H
Roseville Avenue	81.5	91.7	10.2	Year 2-H
<b>SLT 4</b>	<b>81.6</b>	<b>76.1</b>	<b>-5.5</b>	
Alexander	85.5	83.6	-1.9	Ok
Camden Street	76.3	69.0	-7.3	Year 1-H
Fifteenth Avenue	63.0	57.1	-5.9	Year 3
Fourteenth Avenue	84.2	70.6	-13.6	Ok
Harriet Tubman	97.2	74.4	-22.8	Ok
Lincoln	61.5	53.5	-8.0	Year 2
Mt. Vernon	90.8	82.5	-8.3	Year 1-H
South 17th Street	82.4	81.0	-1.4	Year 3-H
Speedway Avenue	70.0	62.9	-7.1	Year 2-H
Thirteenth Avenue	62.2	78.0	15.8	Year 3
<b>SLT 5</b>	<b>77.6</b>	<b>73.0</b>	<b>-4.6</b>	
<b>District</b>	<b>72.7</b>	<b>69.4</b>	<b>-3.3</b>	

## Raising Student Achievement in the Newark Public Schools

### Mathematics—General Education—Grade 4

School	2005 Percent Proficient	2006 Percent Proficient	2005-06 Growth	SI Status 2006-07 <sup>48</sup>
Ann Street	100.0	99.0	-1.0	Ok
Burnet Street	63.6	78.9	15.3	Year 5-H
Cleveland	81.5	69.2	-12.3	Year 2-H
Martin Luther King	29.8	55.6	25.8	Year 5-H
Eighteenth Avenue	62.5	50.0	-12.5	Year 3
Hawkins Street	77.1	41.7	-35.4	Year 4
Lafayette Street	90.7	100.0	9.3	Ok
Newton Street	85.0	83.3	-1.7	Year 6
Oliver Street	97.9	100.0	2.1	Year 3
Quitman Street	74.2	78.0	3.8	Year 3
South Street	66.7	84.6	17.9	Year 3-H
Sussex Avenue	28.2	65.8	37.6	Year 4
Warren Street	90.0	52.2	-37.8	Year 4
Wilson Avenue	96.9	92.4	-4.5	Year 1
<b>SLT 1</b>	<b>77.7</b>	<b>79.8</b>	<b>2.1</b>	
Avon Avenue	25.0	41.7	16.7	Year 6
Belmont-Runyon	25.4	43.0	17.6	Year 3-H
Bragaw	25.8	37.0	11.2	Year 3-H
Chancellor Avenue	52.4	62.0	9.6	Year 4
Dayton Street	37.5	46.7	9.2	Year 5-H
G.W. Carver	32.5	49.3	16.8	Year 6
Hawthorne Avenue	37.1	35.1	-2.0	Year 4
L.A. Spencer	57.0	83.1	26.1	Year 4
Madison	57.2	51.7	-5.5	Year 2
Maple Avenue	47.1	38.1	-9.0	Year 6
Miller Street	74.2	46.9	-27.3	Year 5
Peshine Avenue	85.9	68.3	-17.6	Year 4
<b>SLT 3</b>	<b>47.2</b>	<b>52.2</b>	<b>5.0</b>	
Abington	100.0	100.0	0.0	Year 1
Branch Brook	94.4	100.0	5.6	Year 1-H
Broadway	33.3	48.4	15.1	Year 4
E.A. Flagg	65.2	50.0	-15.2	Year 6
William Horton	51.8	67.1	15.3	Year 5-H
Elliott	62.5	57.6	-4.9	Year 5-H
First Avenue	98.5	88.9	-9.6	Year 1
Franklin	64.3	68.9	4.6	Year 2
McKinley	87.1	64.1	-23.0	Year 2
Rafael Hernandez	65.5	75.0	9.5	Year 6
Ridge Street	83.7	81.8	-1.9	Year 1-H
Roberto Clemente	82.6	97.4	14.8	Year 3-H
Roseville Avenue	92.5	84.0	-8.5	Year 2-H

<sup>48</sup> Source: Preliminary School Improvement Status Summary (SY 06/07)

## Raising Student Achievement in the Newark Public Schools

<b>SLT 4</b>	<b>75.4</b>	<b>76.4</b>	<b>1.0</b>	
Alexander	80.0	84.9	4.9	Ok
Camden Street	89.5	86.2	-3.3	Year 1-H
Fifteenth Avenue	84.6	57.1	-27.5	Year 3
Fourteenth Avenue	100.0	94.1	-5.9	Ok
Harriet Tubman	100.0	93.0	-7.0	Ok
Lincoln	54.4	69.0	14.6	Year 2
Mt. Vernon	73.5	77.7	4.2	Year 1-H
South 17th Street	64.7	90.5	25.8	Year 3-H
Speedway Avenue	75.0	52.9	-22.1	Year 2-H
Thirteenth Avenue	56.5	90.2	33.7	Year 3
<b>SLT 5</b>	<b>73.8</b>	<b>79.2</b>	<b>5.4</b>	
<b>District</b>	<b>68.0</b>	<b>71.7</b>	<b>3.7</b>	

**APPENDIX B. INDIVIDUALS INTERVIEWED**



### APPENDIX B. INDIVIDUALS INTERVIEWED

- Marion A. Bolden, Superintendent
- Felix Rouse, Chairperson, Newark Advisory Board
- Richard Cammarieri, Vice-Chair, Newark Advisory Board
- Gayle Griffin, Assistant Superintendent, Teaching and Learning
- Joanne Begamotto, Assistant Superintendent, School Leadership Team I
- Russell Garris, Assistant Superintendent, School Leadership Team II
- Glenda Johnson-Green, Assistant Superintendent, School Leadership Team III
- Lydia Silva, Assistant Superintendent, School Leadership Team IV,
- Don Marinaro, Assistant Superintendent, School Leadership Team V
- Jerry Bruno, Director, School to Career and College Initiatives
- Stanley Salagaj, Director, Instructional Technology
- Nancy Rivera, Director, Office of Early Childhood
- Anzella Nelms, Deputy Superintendent, Educational Services
- May Samuels, Director, Office of Mathematics
- Robert Cecere, Special Assistant, Pupil Services and Programs
- Thomas Dugan, Director, Special Education
- Vincent Mays, Director, Alternative Education
- Ann Wilson, Supervisor, Gifted and Talented
- Janet Chavis, Supervisor, Office of Title I
- Joe Ann Trotman, Supervisor, Office of Title I
- Joseph Del Grosso, President, Newark Teachers' Union
- Mitchell Gerry, Vice President, Newark Teachers' Union and Newark Public School Psychologist
- Leonard Pugliese, President City Association of Supervisors and Administrators
- Denise Crawford, Parent, Quitman Street Elementary School
- Paulette Jones, Parent, Louise A. Spencer Elementary School
- Amy Aracena, Parent, 14th Avenue Elementary School
- Irma Stamp, Parent, Broadway Elementary School
- Lyndon Brown, Parent, 13th Avenue Elementary School
- Donna Jordan, Parent, Arts High School
- Cheryl Nelson, Parent, Abington Avenue K-8 School
- Rigoberto Salas, Parent, Technology High
- Patricia Bryant, Parent, Science High School
- Judy Diggs, Parent, Mt. Vernon Annex
- Wilhemina Holder, Secondary Parent Council
- Marcia Brown, Vice Provost for Student and Community Affairs, Rutgers University
- Theresa Mikajlo, Director, Language Arts Literacy
- Matthew Brewster, Director, Office of Instructional Staff Development
- Daisy Yarbrough, Supervisor, Office of Instructional Staff Development
- Joylette Mills-Ransome, Director, Office of Science Education
- Daniel Dantas, Director, Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages

## **Raising Student Achievement in the Newark Public Schools**

- Joel Bloom, New Jersey Institute of Technology
- Vivian Cox Frazier, Urban League
- Reginald Lewis, United Way of Essex and West Hudson
- Irene Cooper-Basch, Victoria Foundation, Bethany Baptist Church, and Metropolitan Baptist Church
- Michele Cappetta, Newark Public Library, Newark Museum, New Jersey Performing Arts Center, and New Jersey Historical Society
- Linda Moore, Newark Museum
- Phil Linfante, Essex County College
- David W. Ramsey, United Way
- Sandy Heintz, Mathematics Resource Teacher Coordinator
- Aixa Abreu, Mathematics Resource Teacher Coordinator
- Naga Madhuri Philhana, Math Coach, Morton Street School
- Nicole Johnson, Literacy Resource Teacher Coordinator
- Jeanne Rotunda, Literacy Resource Teacher Coordinator
- Barbara Nash, Literacy Coach, Roberto Clemente K-4 School
- Joanne Alonso, Science Resource Teacher Coordinator
- Derrick Tandy, Science Resource Teacher Coordinator
- Sheila Hatcher, Lead Science Teacher
- Gloria Ricadelli, Grade 4 Teacher, Abington Avenue K-8 School
- Alice Lamply, Read 180 Teacher, 15th Avenue K-8 School
- Meg Murray, Literacy Teacher, East Side High School
- Carla Santos, Grade 2 Teacher, McKinley Elementary School
- Louise Tracy, Grade 4 Literacy Teacher, Hawkins Street Elementary School
- Annette Nekoukar, Grade 4 Literacy Teacher, Hawkins Street Elementary School
- Wendy Moraldo, Grade 8 Science Teacher, Louise A. Spencer Middle School
- Maria Iatesta, Grade 3 Science Teacher, Ridge Street Elementary School
- Linda Richardson, Principal, Ann Street K-8 School
- Kathy Duke-Jackson, Principal, Burnet Street K-8 School
- Ronald Stone, Principal, Weequahic High School
- Christine Taylor, Principal, Science High School
- Winston Jackson, Principal, George W. Carver K-8 School
- Kevin Guyton, Principal, William Brown Academy Middle School
- Joseph Brown, Principal, Louise A. Spencer K-8 School
- Luis Lopez, Principal, Roberto Clemente K-4 School
- Anthony Orsini, Principal, First Avenue K-8 School
- Joyce Kornegay, Principal, 15th Avenue K-8 School
- Leonard Kopacz, Principal, 13th Avenue K-8 School
- Shirley Grundy, Director of Student Services
- Marbella Barrera, Director of Planning, Evaluation and Testing
- Eric Cooper, President, National Urban Alliance (interviewed by Michael Casserly by telephone)

**APPENDIX C. DOCUMENTS REVIEWED**

### APPENDIX C. DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

- Two Year Report on Instructional Priorities, December 1, 2005
- Report on Planning for Professional Learning
- Educational Services Action Plan
- Newark Public Schools—Organizational Structure
- Newark Public School Directory
- Formative/Summative Evaluation (Elementary Principal)
- Formative/Summative Evaluation (Elementary Vice Principal)
- Formative/Summative Evaluation (Secondary Principal)
- Formative/Summative Evaluation (Secondary Vice Principal)
- Secondary Department Chairperson’s Evaluation
- Achievement Through Teaching Excellence: A System of Teacher Observation and Performance Evaluation 2006-2007
- Newark Public Schools Formative Teacher Observation
- District Whole School Reform Model, 2006-2007
- Curriculum Statements, 2006-2007 and table of contents
- Language Arts Literacy Policy and Practices and Elementary, Middle and Secondary Schools, SY 2006-2007
- Mathematics Program Policy and Practices for Elementary and Middle Schools, SY 2006-2007
- Science Education Program Policies and Practices for Elementary, Middle and Secondary Schools, SY 2006-2007
- Cumulative Progress Indicators by the End of Fourth Grade for Harcourt *Trophies* 2005 Edition
- Correlation of the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards to Harcourt *Trophies* 2005 Edition by Page Reference
- Correlation of the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards to Harcourt *Trophies* 2005 Edition by Learning Objective
- Getting Started in the K-5 Classroom
- Registered Holistic Scoring Method for K-2 Students
- Procedural Writing Rubric for Primary and Intermediate Grades
- NJ ASK Open-Ended Scoring Rubric for Reading, Listening, and Viewing
- A Curriculum Guide for Mathematics Grade 4, 2004-2005
- A Curriculum Guide for Mathematics Grade 5, 2004-2005
- A Curriculum Guide for Algebra I, 1999 Draft
- Suggested Timeline for *Everyday Mathematics* Grade 4 with Correlation to New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards for Mathematics
- Open-Ended Problem Solving and Scoring
- Grade Four Science Curriculum Guide 2005, Draft Copy
- Language Arts Literacy Assessment: Placement and Diagnostic Assessment with Interval and Ongoing Assessments, Grade 4
- Grade 4 Quarterly Mathematics Assessments Fall, 2006 with rubrics for open-ended questions

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- School Leadership Team III Grade Four Science Summative Assessment: Animal Studies, Environments, Organisms, Earth History, NJ ASK Science Practice Test SY 2005-2006
- Newark Public Schools: Texts in Use 2006/2007
- Newark Public Schools Alternative Programs
- Advisory Board Meeting Agenda, May 23, 2006
- Advisory Board Meeting Agenda, June 20, 2006
- Advisory Board Meeting Agenda, August 15, 2006
- PRC/504/Student Flag Data Summary 2005-2006 School Year by SLT
- PRC/504 Data Report
- Grade 4—Animal Studies, School Year 2005-2006 and other science benchmark data analysis
- Newark Public School District-side Assessments Secondary Science Final Exams Data
- Office of Language Arts Literacy End-of-Year Report 2005-2006 Mid Term/Final Exams: Grades 9-11 Results and Analysis
- McGraw Hill Digital Learning Usage Reports and Grade Level Mastery Reports
- ASK3 Data Report
- 2005-2006 Comparative NJ ASK3 Performance, Language Arts – General Education
- 2005-2006 Comparative NJ ASK3 Performance, Mathematics – General Education
- ASK4 Data Report
- 2005-2006 Comparative ASK 4 Performance SLT/ District Summaries – General Education
- 2005-2006 Comparative NJ ASK4 Performance, Language Arts – General Education
- 2005-2006 Comparative NJ ASK4 Performance, Mathematics – General Education
- Grade 4 Assessment of Skills and Knowledge – 2004/05: Percentage of Students at Each Proficiency Level
- ASK 5, 6, 7 Data
- 2006 ASK5 Performance
- 2006 ASK 6 Performance
- 2006 ASK7 Performance
- 2006 NJ ASK7 Performance Language Arts – General Education
- 2006 NJ ASK7 Performance Mathematics – General Education
- Spring 2006 ASK 5,6,7 Passing Rates, Non-official preliminary report
- GEPA Data
- 2005-2006 Comparative GEPA Performance – General Education Students
- 2005-2006 Comparative GEPA Performance Language Arts – General Education
- 2005-2006 Comparative GEPA Performance Mathematics – General Education
- 2005-2006 Comparative GEPA Performance Science- General Education
- Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment 2004-2005 SLT 1, 3, 4,5 – General Education Students, Passing Rates
- Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science Cluster Performance in GEPA—Graphs
- GEPA 2006 Cluster Raw Scores
- GEPA Gender Comparison
- AYP Status
- GEPA 2006 Mathematics and Science by Cluster

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- General Education Students Performance in GEPA, SPA 5, SPA 6, SPA 7 (2004-2005)
- School Performance in District Tests
- SPA 2004-2005 Comparative Passing Rates – General Education (9th- and 10th-Graders)
- Spring 2006 ASK 5, 6, 7 Passing Rates
- HSPA Comparative Performance
- GEPA Demographics
- HSPA Demographics
- 2005 PSAT School Mean Data
- 2002-2005 SAT Verbal and Math Mean Scores
- ASK 4 Demographics
- 11th-Graders Eligible for NMSQT Scholarship
- Students Enrolled in Honors and Advanced Placement Courses 2000-2001 through 2005-2006 in English, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies and Foreign Language
- 2006 State Test Results
- Office of School-to-Career & College Initiative Annual Report 2004-2005
- High School Resource Guide, August 2006
- A Day in the Life of Newark
- Secondary Student Success: A Framework for Accountability
- The Newark Public Schools 2004-2005 Annual Report
- Parent Notification Letters for Title I
- Supplementary Educational Services
- Magnet School Applications
- AYP Preliminary Status Report 2006-07
- Year 5 and 6 Restructuring NCLB Plan
- Title I SES Part 1
- Title I SES Part 2
- Sample of Year 5 Restructuring Plan
- A Resource Guide for Newark’s Special Education Programs
- Program Description: Bilingual/ESL Education
- Letter to the Honorable Cory Booker from Johns Hopkins University Center for Talented Youth (CTY)
- Gifted and Talented information
- Education Law Center Abbott Indicators Report
- Central Office Survey
- Community Surveys
- National Science Foundation (NSF) Evaluation Report
- GAO Title I Evaluation
- NJ DOE Title I Evaluation
- NJ DOE Early Childhood Program Evaluation – SAVS and ECERS
- Early Learning Improvement Consortium
- Standards Proficiency Assessment (SPA) brochure
- Career Academies...The Real Payoff folder
- “Home is Where the Heart Is” Can Cory Booker Save Newark’s Schools? *Education Next*, Fall 2006

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- Graph: Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment – Language Arts Literacy General Education Students Longitudinal Comparison of Newark Students versus Abbott, State and DFG I&J
- Special Education Training Modules (CD-ROM)
- NJCCS CD-ROM, Project in Cooperation with Newark Teachers’ Union, Seton Hall University, and the Newark Public Schools (April 2006)
- Personal Statement regarding the Newark Schools “We the People” Parade 6/20/06, Richard Cammarieri, New Schools Advisory Board Member
- NJ ASK 2005 CAPA (Collective Assessment and Planning for Achievement) Reports (CD)
- NJ ASK 2005, Student Writing Samples Grades 3 and 4 and Poem Prompts, CD
- Grade 4 NJ ASK Mathematics Practice Test Open-Ended Worksheet Booklet, 2004-2005
- Grade 4 NJ Ask 2004 Mathematics Practice Test Directions for Administering
- Grade 4 Ask Mathematics Practice Test, October 2004
- HSPA Mathematics Practice Test HSPA, December 2003
- HSPA Practice Test December 2003 by high school (results by question type and correct answer percentage by item)
- Supplemental Services Site Summary Report
- ASTU Gifted Report
- Newark Charter School list
- New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge with Adjust Mean Scale Scores, 1999-2004
- Long Range Technology Plan, 2004-2007
- Introducing the Newark Public Schools Math eBoard
- ePals Press Release
- Parent eBoards
- Instructional Technology Standards Guides 2005
- The Creative Curriculum for Preschool, Fourth Edition
- College Fair Flyers
- Rutgers-Newark “Building Community Together” Community Outreach and Partnership Programs
- Observation Checklists: Preschool, Math, Health and Physical Education, Instructional Technology, Language Arts Literacy, Visual and Performing Arts Elementary, Science, Social Studies, Second Language Instruction
- Office of Bilingual, ESL and World Language Education (overview and data comparison)
- February 2005 Office of Inspector General Audit
- United States Government Accountability Report
- NJDOE Program Planning and Accountability SES Report
- SES Provider Placement by School
- Letter from Governor Jon S. Corzine dated March 16, 2006, regarding findings and recommendations from the review of Newark’s Title I program conducted by the New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Title I Program Planning and Accountability.

## **Raising Student Achievement in the Newark Public Schools**

- The Newark Public Schools Discipline Plan and Policy, revised September 2005
- Newark Public Schools Physics Curriculum Guide
- Newark Public Schools Chemistry Curriculum Guide
- Newark Public Schools General Biology Curriculum Guide
- Newark Public Schools College Preparatory Biology Curriculum Guide
- Newark Public Schools 2004-2005 Annual Report
- Teaching Profile by Pathwise, 2004
- Class Profile by Pathwise, 2004
- Pathwise Components of Professional Practice, Educational Testing Service
- Newark Public Schools Formative Teacher Observation
- Newark Public Schools Professional Observation Form
- Services Provided by the Office of Mathematics, First Quarter 2005
- Newark Public School District-Wide Assessments Secondary Science
- A Framework for Planning and Reporting Professional Learning in Abbott School Districts 2006
- Directory of Test Specifications and Sample Items for the Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment (GEPA) and the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) in Mathematics, February 1998
- Directory of Test Specifications and Sample Items for the Elementary School Proficiency Assessment (ESPA) in Mathematics, April 1998
- Grade 4 Mathematics Mid-Year Exam
- Grade 4 Mathematics Final Exam
- Grade 4 Mathematics Assessment Fall
- Language Arts Literacy Curriculum, revised, Grades 6-8, 2002-2003
- English Curriculum, Grades 9-12, undated
- New Jersey Department of Education Core Curriculum Content Standards: Language Arts Literacy, Mathematics, Science (adopted July 2, 2002)
- New Jersey Department of Education Core Curriculum Content Standards: Language Arts Literacy, Mathematics, Science (adopted October, 2004)
- Newark, New Jersey: Tracking Progress, Engaging Communities: Abbott Indicators Summary Report
- “Time to Focus: How the Evidence of Student Achievement Can Improve Teaching and Learning,” Abbott Districts’ Convocation, October 28, 2003
- Abbott Districts Growth, Changes in Students (sic) Passing Rates, 2000-2003
- No Child Left Behind, Parent U Professional Development
- High School Applications or Admission
- Principals Assigned Since 1999
- Grading/Promotion Policy Handbook



**APPENDIX D. STRATEGIC SUPPORT TEAM MEMBERS**

**APPENDIX D. STRATEGIC SUPPORT TEAM MEMBERS**

**Michael Casserly**

Michael Casserly is the Executive Director of the Council of the Great City Schools, a coalition of 66 of the nation's largest urban public school districts—including Newark's. Dr. Casserly has been with the organization for 28 years, 13 of them as Executive Director. Before heading the group, he was the organization's chief lobbyist on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., and served as the Council's director of research. Dr. Casserly has led major reforms in federal education laws, has garnered significant aid for urban schools across the country, has spurred major gains in urban school achievement and management, and has advocated for urban school leadership in the standards movement. He led the organization in holding the nation's first summit of urban school superintendents and big-city mayors. He has a Ph.D. degree from the University of Maryland and a B.A. degree from Villanova University.

**Shelley Kim Ferguson**

Shelley Kim Ferguson is currently a mathematics resource teacher in the San Diego Unified School District. She supports the district's cadre of school-based mathematics resource teachers with professional development and works at their sites to improve mathematics teaching and student learning. The resource teachers support schools with the greatest diversity and academic need. Ms. Ferguson is also a member of Board of Directors of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics and served for two years as the Council's outreach coordinator for the *Principles and Standards for School Mathematics* report that was released in 2000. Ms. Ferguson's prior professional experiences include serving as program manager for the San Diego Unified School District's mathematics department and coordinator for the California Mathematics Project. She also served for more than 20 years as a classroom teacher with the Chula Vista School District. Ms. Ferguson received two M.A. degrees in education from San Diego State University, one with an emphasis in K-8 mathematics education, and the other in curriculum and instruction. She also received an administrative credential from Chapman University and an A. B. degree from San Diego State University.

**Lois McGee**

Lois McGee has worked for the School District of Philadelphia since 1975. Currently, she serves as an administrator in the Office of Curriculum and Instruction, where she supports special programs at the secondary level. Ms. McGee also devotes considerable time and effort to supporting the implementation of the core curriculum as it relates to literacy development. In her career with the School District of Philadelphia, she has held a variety of administrative positions at the cluster, regional, and central levels. These positions include serving as teaching and learning network coordinator for the Overbrook Cluster, lead secondary literacy coach for West Academic Area, and *No Child Left Behind* district liaison for the West Region. Over the years, Ms. McGee also has worked

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with numerous local and national educational organizations, including the Philadelphia Education Fund, the Annenberg Foundation, the International Reading Association, and the Academy for Educational Development. In addition, as an adjunct professor at Drexel University, she supports pre-service graduate students and aspiring principals. Ms. McGee earned an undergraduate degree in early childhood education and a master's degree in the psychology of reading from Temple University and completed coursework for the principal certificate at Cheney University. Presently, she holds a Pennsylvania Instructional 2 certificate in early childhood education, a Pennsylvania reading specialist certificate, and a Pennsylvania secondary principal certificate.

### **Ricki-Price Baugh**

Ricki Price-Baugh retired as the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instructional Development in the Houston Independent School District. She was responsible for strategic planning and the design, implementation, and evaluation of the district's prekindergarten-through-grade 12 curriculum, staff development of teachers and administrators, and alternative certification. Dr. Price-Baugh joined the Houston school system in 1970. Through the years, she served the system as a teacher, department chair, resource coordinator, project manager, director of curriculum services, and director of curriculum before being elevated to the assistant superintendent post. Her major accomplishments include a districtwide effort to align curriculum, textbook, and assessment systems, and the development of a detailed curriculum and set of model lessons in the four core content areas and supporting implementation of that curriculum. These efforts led to a substantial increase in student achievement scores. She is a certified curriculum auditor for Phi Delta Kappa. Dr. Price-Baugh received a doctoral degree from Baylor University, a master's degree in Spanish literature from the University of Maryland, and a B.A. degree (magna cum laude, Phi Beta Kappa) from Tulane University.

### **Nancy J. Timmons**

Nancy Timmons is a national consultant and textbook contributor. She recently retired as Associate Superintendent for the Fort Worth Independent School District. During her 14 years with the Fort Worth schools, she served as Associate Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent of Administrative Services, and Executive Director for Curriculum. Dr. Timmons had been a middle and high school teacher in the Rockdale and Temple Independent School Districts in Texas, supervisor of English Language Arts/Social Studies, and Director of Curriculum in the Temple Independent School District, Texas. Dr. Timmons earned a B.S. degree from Prairie View A & M University and M.S. and Doctorate of Education degrees from Baylor University in Texas. She is a certified Phi Delta Kappa curriculum auditor and has served on audits in several states. She also has been an adjunct professor in the Graduate School at Tarleton State University in Texas. Dr. Timmons has extensive experience in curriculum design and development, campus and district planning, school improvement, and staff development. She is listed in *Who's Who in American Education* and has served on boards for numerous community, civic, and educational organizations. She currently is a member of the Board of Visitors for the

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Texas Christian University School of Education and serves as executive advisor to the School District of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

### **Denise Walston**

Denise Walston is the senior coordinator for mathematics in the Norfolk (Va.) Public Schools, having held this post since 1994. In this capacity, she has overseen the district's dramatic improvement in math achievement scores. Ms. Walston is an active member of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, the National Council of Supervisors of Mathematics, and has served as president of the Tidewater Council of Teachers of Mathematics. She also serves on a number of statewide assessment committees responsible for the development and oversight of Virginia's math standards and testing system. She received an undergraduate degree in mathematics from the University of North Carolina and a master's degree in mathematics education from Old Dominion University. Ms. Walston has also taken extensive graduate courses from Princeton and George Washington universities. She began her career as a high school math teacher in the Norfolk Public Schools.

**APPENDIX E. ABOUT THE COUNCIL**

**APPENDIX E. ABOUT THE COUNCIL**

**Council of the Great City Schools**

The Council of the Great City Schools is a coalition of 66 of the nation's largest urban public school systems. Its Board of Directors is composed of the Superintendent of Schools and one School Board member from each member city. An Executive Committee of 24 individuals, equally divided in number between Superintendents and School Board members, provides regular oversight of the 501(c)(3) organization. The mission of the Council is to advocate for urban public education and assist its members in the improvement of leadership and instruction. The Council provides services to its members in the areas of legislation, research, communications, curriculum and instruction, and management. The group convenes two major conferences each year; conducts studies on urban school conditions and trends; and operates ongoing networks of senior school district managers with responsibilities in areas such as federal programs, operations, finance, personnel, communications, research, and technology. The Council was founded in 1956 and incorporated in 1961, and has its headquarters in Washington, D.C.

## Raising Student Achievement in the Newark Public Schools

### Strategic Support Teams Conducted by the Council of the Great City Schools

City	Area	Year
Albuquerque		
	Facilities and Roofing	2003
	Human Resources	2003
	Information Technology	2003
	Special Education	2005
	Legal Services	2005
	School Security	2007
Anchorage		
	Finance	2004
Broward County (FLA)		
	Information Technology	2000
Buffalo		
	Superintendent Support	2000
	Organizational Structure	2000
	Curriculum and Instruction	2000
	Personnel	2000
	Facilities and Operations	2000
	Communications	2000
	Finance	2000
	Finance II	2003
Caddo Parish (LA)		
	Facilities	2004
Charleston		
	Special Education	2005
Charlotte-Mecklenburg		
	Human Resources	2007
Cincinnati		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2004
Cleveland		
	Student Assignments	1999, 2000
	Transportation	2000
	Safety and Security	2000
	Facilities Financing	2000
	Facilities Operations	2000
	Transportation	2004
	Curriculum and Instruction	2005
Columbus		
	Superintendent Support	2001
	Human Resources	2001
	Facilities Financing	2002

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	Finance and Treasury	2003
	Budget	2003
	Curriculum and Instruction	2005
Dallas		
	Procurement	2007
Dayton		
	Superintendent Support	2001
	Curriculum and Instruction	2001
	Finance	2001
	Communications	2002
	Curriculum and Instruction	2005
	Budget	2005
Denver		
	Superintendent Support	2001
	Personnel	2001
	Curriculum and Instruction	2005
	Bilingual Education	2006
Des Moines		
	Budget and Finance	2003
Detroit		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2002
	Assessment	2002
	Communications	2002
	Curriculum and Assessment	2003
	Communications	2003
	Textbook Procurement	2004
	Food Services	2007
Greensboro		
	Bilingual Education	2002
	Information Technology	2003
	Special Education	2003
	Facilities	2004
	Human Resources	2007
Hillsborough County (FLA)		
	Transportation	2005
	Procurement	2005
Jacksonville		
	Organization and Management	2002
	Operations	2002
	Human Resources	2002
	Finance	2002
	Information Technology	2002
	Finance	2006



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Kansas City		
	Human Resources	2005
	Information Technology	2005
	Finance	2005
	Operations	2005
	Purchasing	2006
	Curriculum and Instruction	2006
Los Angeles		
	Budget and Finance	2002
	Organizational Structure	2005
	Finance	2005
	Information Technology	2005
	Human Resources	2005
	Business Services	2005
Louisville		
	Management Information	2005
Memphis		
	Information Technology	2007
Miami-Dade County		
	Construction Management	2003
Milwaukee		
	Research and Testing	1999
	Safety and Security	2000
	School Board Support	1999
	Curriculum and Instruction	2006
Minneapolis		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2004
	Finance	2004
	Federal Programs	2004
Newark		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2007
New Orleans		
	Personnel	2001
	Transportation	2002
	Information Technology	2003
	Hurricane Damage Assessment	2005
	Curriculum and Instruction	2006
Norfolk		
	Testing and Assessment	2003
Philadelphia		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2003
	Federal Programs	2003
	Food Service	2003

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	Facilities	2003
	Transportation	2003
	Human Resources	2004
Pittsburgh		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2005
	Technology	2006
	Finance	2006
Providence		
	Business Operations	2001
	MIS and Technology	2001
	Personnel	2001
Richmond		
	Transportation	2003
	Curriculum and Instruction	2003
	Federal Programs	2003
	Special Education	2003
Rochester		
	Finance and Technology	2003
	Transportation	2004
	Food Services	2004
San Diego		
	Finance	2006
	Food Service	2006
	Transportation	2007
	Procurement	2007
San Francisco		
	Technology	2001
St. Louis		
	Special Education	2003
	Curriculum and Instruction	2004
	Federal Programs	2004
	Textbook Procurement	2004
	Human Resources	2005
Toledo		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2005
Washington, D.C.		
	Finance and Procurement	1998
	Personnel	1998
	Communications	1998
	Transportation	1998
	Facilities Management	1998
	Special Education	1998
	Legal and General Counsel	1998

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	MIS and Technology	1998
	Curriculum and Instruction	2003
	Budget and Finance	2005
	Transportation	2005