

Action Plan 3.0

School District of Philadelphia

March 4, 2015

**“We are making our schools great.
Join us.”**

Overview

This plan is a description of the School District of Philadelphia’s current and planned priority work. Its primary objective is to align the work of all employees to the Anchor Goals and Actions described here. It is also intended to communicate a comprehensive overview of the District’s plan to parents, families, students, partners and stakeholders. Building off Action Plan 2.0, and developed after an additional year of work, reflection, review, and research, it is a “living document” subject to change as new facts are gathered and new evidence comes to light.

Feedback on this Action Plan and new ideas should be provided to: actionplan@philasd.org

This Action Plan can be accessed online at: www.philasd.org/actionplan

Superintendent's Message

Times of diminishing resources require an even greater commitment to equity.

Over the last three years, students, families, and employees in The School District of Philadelphia have rallied towards that goal in innumerable ways. The Action Plan has mirrored the progress, prospects, and challenges of the District. In the first version, our focus was on improving our academic offerings and stabilizing our finances. Last year's plan expanded our work on core concerns like early literacy and graduation rates. Now is the time to ensure that every child is part of the gains we make. Action Plan 3.0 is an effort to deliver on our vision for equity. That vision is outlined in the pages ahead, embodied in a new approach to lifting the achievement of every student, wherever they live and whatever their background. Our plan also envisions repairing our structural budget challenges in collaboration with our government partners.

I am gratified by the work and dedication of employees at every level of the organization to support our students and schools. Our educators and administrators have spent an incredible amount of time and energy to serve our more than 130,000 students and their families, and to make the most of our resources. The current plan, 3.0, would not be possible without them and builds on their efforts.

So what have we accomplished together?

In the area of **high-quality instruction**, we have aligned our reading and math curricula to state standards and provided educators with more classroom resources and tools for improvement, such as new curricular materials for all grades, including informational and literary texts and math resources designed to build conceptual understanding. We have rolled out School Progress Reports reflecting core values and aspirations for all schools, and begun to use these reports in our *System of Great Schools* annual decision-making approach to supporting and responding to schools. With our educators, we have successfully continued the implementation of the Educator Effectiveness System and teacher and principal training on all elements of the system. And we have made significant improvements in our hiring and selection systems: we have redesigned the principal hiring process, including a robust recruitment plan and competency rubric; and we have implemented complete site selection for teaching vacancies and a process for seniority exceptions in the assignment and transfer process. To ensure school environments that are conducive to learning, we have expanded our Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS) and Restorative Practices programs to 33 schools with the greatest need.

Also, we are proud to have made strong headway in our coordination of **early literacy efforts**. Early literacy is an important indicator for future success for all children, and we have joined with local organizations to enhance reading proficiency in pre-kindergarten through third grades. This has included the hiring and training of school-based literacy specialists for the schools that need them the most, and the adoption of other instructional supports and tools to accelerate our progress on early literacy. We have further promoted early literacy through the formation of Anchor Goal-aligned partnerships, and offered training sessions for parents in select schools regarding early literacy and supports that can be provided at home.

Over the past year, we have also continued to offer **new opportunities for students and families** focused on meeting student needs. For example, we successfully launched our online school application process, generating 3,000 more applications than we received in the prior year. We created an elementary dual-language bilingual program and began the conversion of five transitional bilingual programs to dual-language programs. We designed and opened three new open-admission high schools implementing personalized, competency-based learning models. We also selected the first four schools for our exciting new School Redesign Initiative, and have worked hard to support those school communities in their locally-developed transformation efforts. With parents, we have facilitated School Advisory Council (SAC) formation and elections, bringing to 127 the schools with active SACs. We have also re-committed to gathering actionable information from our parents, families and students through the revival of our Action Plan-aligned District-wide student and parent surveys.

Finally, we have made progress obtaining the necessary **resources** to adequately serve our students and families. We have a long way to go, but we are proud and grateful for the work of our funding partners on behalf of our students. With them, we secured almost \$200 million per year in additional, recurring revenues from legislative approval of sales and cigarette taxes. At the local school level, we mapped existing District-community partnerships alongside local school needs in order to better match generous community resources with local school communities, and to prepare for a more strategic deployment of partners' support to further District goals.

I hope my message is clear: we have accomplished a tremendous amount together, and built a solid foundation for the next phase of our work. We are justifiably proud, and I am grateful and humbled by what our team members have accomplished to serve our children and families. Make no mistake, though: we have much, much more to do together.

The latest update to the Action Plan reflects this challenge, and details our efforts to build on our prior work and design a system that better serves the needs of our diverse students and their communities. Our charge is unchanged: *Every child can learn. Every school can be great.* To enable both, we must ensure equity throughout the School District. I hope the pages ahead spark and renew your personal commitment to furthering that work.

*Dr. William Hite
Superintendent
March 4, 2015*

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Executive Summary: actions in brief

All actions directly support the attainment of one or more of the District’s four **Anchor Goals**:

- ❶ 100% of students will graduate, ready for college and career.
- ❷ 100% of 8-year-olds will read on grade level.
- ❸ 100% of schools will have great principals and teachers.
- ❹ SDP will have 100% of the funding we need for great schools, and zero deficit.

	Anchor Goals addressed by each action
I. An equitable system of schools	
Action 1. Maintain a system of great schools with the school models and programs we need to serve <i>all</i> students equitably.	❶ ❷ ❸ ❹
a. Reinvest in Networks of local, neighborhood schools, open to all students.	❶ ❷
b. Dramatically improve our lowest-performing schools by creating and investing in a Turnaround Network, comprised of District-run, evidence-based turnaround model(s); proven external provider-run turnaround models; and Renaissance charter turnarounds.	❶ ❷
c. Review and improve the provision of schooling for “opportunity youth” who are at risk or already detached from schooling by establishing an Opportunity Network, comprised of District-run and external-provider alternative education options.	❶
d. Establish and nurture an Innovation Network of new, evidence-based school models, and continuously evaluate the schools to inform future plans for replication and transformation.	❶ ❸
e. Over time, offer the option of 100% autonomy to certain District-run schools, including a per-student funding allocation and Charter-like flexibilities.	❸
f. Annually collect and analyze data on school progress and release a School Progress Report for each school.	❶ ❷
g. Promote compelling, successful programs including Career and Technical Education, AP and IB courses, and project-based learning.	❶
h. Through the School Redesign Initiative, provide evidence-based opportunities for school communities and partners to transform themselves to meet the needs of the students they serve.	❶ ❷ ❸
i. Create a service delivery model pilot program to explore offering best-in-class District services on a fee-for-service basis, including to non-District schools.	❹
j. Invest the time and resources we need to reorient our organization to support the System of Great Schools.	❶ ❷ ❸ ❹
k. Continuously update and refine the System of Great Schools plan, including expansion and replication of good schools, and transformation or closure of chronically under-enrolled and under-performing schools.	❶ ❷ ❸ ❹
Action 2. Be a great charter school authorizer to ensure all charters are good school options, and promote the sharing of successful practices across all schools.	❶ ❷

II. District schools for student success

A. Teaching

Action 3.	Provide excellent teaching in all classrooms.	1 2 3
	a. Consistently promote excellent instruction through a clear vision for achievement and strong and productive feedback to teachers.	1 2 3
	b. Create meaningful opportunities for principal and for teacher collaboration focused on teaching.	1 2 3
	c. Supply assessment results in a timely manner through updated student- and teacher-facing data systems so as to inform instructional planning.	1 2 3
	d. Enhance implementation of Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS, also known as RtII).	1 2
Action 4.	Implement a flexible curriculum aligned to the PA Core Standards.	1 2
	a. Align curricula, assessments, and materials to the PA Core Standards, providing an appropriately paced and rigorous framework that allows for flexibility in instructional delivery.	1 2
	b. Align graduation standards based on student mastery of content, drawing on the PA Core Standards' description of a college- and career-ready student.	1
Action 5.	Promote a literacy-rich continuum from preK through Grade 3, including recuperative practices.	2
	a. Ensure alignment of curricular standards from preK through Grade 3.	2
	b. Integrate the Comprehensive Literacy Framework in all preK through Grade 3 classrooms.	2
	c. Working with our preK partners, expand availability and access to high quality preK programs to increase Kindergarten readiness.	2
Action 6.	Provide specialized learning experiences for students who need them.	1 2
	a. Provide high quality services to special education students in the least restrictive environment, supported by collaboration between general education and special education teachers.	1 2
	b. Support rigorous and linguistically appropriate learning experiences for English Language Learners (ELLs).	1 2
Action 7.	Recognize, respond to, and support the social-emotional and behavioral health needs of our students.	1 2 3
	a. Equip staff to recognize and appropriately address students' social-emotional and behavioral needs through trauma-informed practices.	1 2 3
	b. Integrate a focus on "academic tenacity" throughout students' educational experience.	1 2
	c. Implement and maintain age-appropriate, school-wide climate plans that incorporate evidence-based programs and practices.	1 2 3
	d. Equip staff and students to implement the Bullying and Harassment Policies with fidelity.	1 2 3

		Anchor Goals addressed by each action
Action 8.	Implement a coherent assessment system aligned to the PA Core Standards.	1 2 3
	a. Adopt and implement a coherent assessment system that helps educators monitor student progress, informs instructional practices, and assists in the identification of appropriate interventions.	1 2 3
	b. Maintain data accuracy by ensuring that all instructional staff are trained to administer assessments to produce reliable and valid results.	3
 B. School environment		
Action 9.	Provide well-resourced, clean, comfortable, healthy, and safe school environments conducive to teaching and learning.	1 2 3 4
	a. Provide teachers with the materials and supplies required to effectively teach students.	1 2 3
	b. Provide a clean and comfortable building environment in all schools.	1 2 3
	c. Prevent and remediate environmental health hazards, including asthma triggers.	1 2 3
	d. Focus capital investments in support of teaching and learning.	1 2 4
	e. Ensure that all schools have thorough, clear safety plans protecting the security of students and staff.	1 2 3
Action 10.	Improve the provisions of services so students arrive in classrooms ready to learn.	1 2 4
	a. Improve student nutrition and meal experience.	1 2
	b. Improve the quality of transportation services.	1 2 4
Action 11.	Create meaningful partnerships with parents and families.	1 2
	a. Support multiple opportunities and models for parent and family engagement.	1 2
	b. Provide parents with the information and tools to support their children’s academic progress.	1 2
	c. Provide parents of preK through Grade 3 students with resources and activities to promote the development of language and literacy skills outside the classroom.	2
	d. Provide parents with the information they need to make informed choices about their children’s academic experience.	1 2
Action 12.	Connect schools with community resources and partnerships to meet student needs.	1 2 3 4
	a. Cultivate, encourage, and expand partnerships that prove most effective in addressing students’ needs.	1 2
	b. Improve information sharing with partners to direct resources and align activities toward meeting students’ needs.	1 2 3 4
	c. Actively participate in and contribute to the Citywide READ! by 4 th Campaign.	2
	d. Mobilize and direct relevant community partners to most effectively advance students’ readiness for and access to college and career.	1

		<u>Anchor Goals addressed by each action</u>
C. People		
Action 13.	Identify and select exceptional principals, teachers, and other staff.	1 2 3
	a. Improve recruitment practices to attract the highest quality candidates.	1 2 3
	b. Strengthen the principal and teacher pipelines both by identifying high-potential pools of external talent, and by cultivating and developing internal high performers for advancement.	1 2 3
	c. Improve selection and hiring practices to ensure the right individuals are staffed in our schools.	1 2 3
	d. Integrate within the recruitment pipeline for early elementary school teachers a preference for candidates with demonstrated experience or certification in teaching preK through Grade 3 students.	2 3
Action 14.	Support the continuous development of all personnel with high-quality training, evaluation, and coaching.	1 2 3
	a. Set clear expectations for teachers, principals, and support staff through faithful implementation of the Pennsylvania Educator Effectiveness System.	1 2 3
	b. Provide high-leverage professional development that supports teacher and principal growth and promotes effective instructional practices in every classroom.	1 2 3
	c. Promote and support professional educator networks.	1 2 3
Action 15.	Celebrate, retain and promote high-performing staff.	3
III. Funding the plan		
Action 16.	Obtain necessary and deserved additional public revenue.	4
Action 17.	Ensure fairness of charter per pupil payments, and accuracy of enrollment distribution.	4
Action 18.	Ensure productivity and efficiency in use of all funding.	1 2 3 4
	a. Develop a comprehensive, outcomes-focused budgeting strategy, including five year planning.	1 2 3 4
	b. Continuously analyze the impact of spending, and deploy resources to achieve priorities, including consideration for the activities, schools, and programs that need them the most.	1 2 3 4
	c. Align capital and grants programs in support of our Anchor Goals.	1 2 3 4
	d. Continuously identify savings opportunities and capture identified cost savings.	4
	e. Institute financial controls.	4
Action 19.	Ensure equitable allocation, including student weighted funding.	4
Action 20.	Build a strong development function.	4
Action 21.	Achieve additional, needed structural budget fixes.	4

IV. Responsive service and support

Action 22.	Be accessible and responsive to students, parents, families, colleagues, and the public.	1 2 3
	a. Become world class at providing customer service.	1 2 3
	b. Actively solicit and respond to feedback on the effectiveness of our schools and our key departments through surveys, focus groups, and town halls.	1 2 3
Action 23.	Become a high-functioning and dynamic central organization.	1 2 3 4
	a. Improve the accuracy, accessibility, and use of whole-system and central-office data to better facilitate data-driven decision-making.	1 2 3 4
	b. Continue to incorporate research and evidence to improve and evolve our teaching and learning activities, evaluate the impact of our efforts, and improve fidelity of implementation.	1 2 3
	c. Implement effective, aligned business processes.	4
	d. Transform the organization at all levels and build a culture of excellence by instituting strategic management processes.	1 2 3 4
	e. Develop and implement a user-friendly way to share and spread effective ideas (i.e., a “knowledge management strategy”) that drives the adoption and integration of evidence-based practices at the classroom, school, and system level.	1 2 3
	f. Improve communication throughout the organization and to the public.	1 2 3 4
Action 24.	Actively promote innovation at all levels of the organization.	1 2 3
	a. Solicit input from multiple stakeholders regarding areas to be improved through innovation.	1 2 3
	b. Develop and utilize a common set of tools, strategies, and processes to facilitate innovative approaches to solve organizational challenges.	1 2 3
	c. Encourage, learn from, and thoughtfully support innovators.	3
Action 25.	Engage teachers, principals, professional networks, and labor unions to identify, explore, develop, and scale great ideas.	1 2 3
	a. Invite teachers and teacher networks to share ideas and insights that improve student outcomes.	1 2 3
	b. Work collaboratively with both our staff and the organizations that represent them to develop and scale practices that work.	1 2 3

The Vision of the School District of Philadelphia

The School District of Philadelphia will deliver on the right of every child in Philadelphia to an excellent public school education and ensure all children graduate from high school ready to succeed.

Introduction

The 130,000 children and youth entrusted to The School District of Philadelphia arrive at our schools every day with an extraordinary range of needs. There are seniors at selective admission schools comparing semester abroad programs at elite colleges. There are 16-year-olds enrolling mid-year in middle school. There are third graders struggling to learn how to read while getting to know their third teacher of the year.

Another 63,000 students are in the charter schools we authorize; our alternative schools serve 3,600 students. Thousands of young people are in and out of school or not in school at all.

Our approach needs to be responsive across this very large population. Our accountability is the extent to which we provide the best academic program, and the chance for a better life that comes with it, to each student: the student who excels, the student who struggles, all the students in between. And our neediest students: those who continue to be failed by adults and therefore need us most.

The premise of this year's Action Plan is that the conversation about The School District of Philadelphia is a conversation about every child in the city. Equity is our mandate. Our role is to ensure that under-served children and youth get better, more comprehensive options along with everyone else.

We will get there with an approach that builds on the strengths of the current system while also introducing some highly specialized new elements – all focused solely on the needs of young people.

The School District is the cornerstone of public education in Philadelphia. Neighborhood schools open to all are community anchors. The District's scale creates vital economies that reduce costs, enable us to do smart things quickly across multiple schools, allow for investment in research and development, and leverages the contributions from the city's generous philanthropic community. We also celebrate some of the best schools in the state, and many, many schools where extraordinary moments of learning occur throughout the day. Most importantly, the District is comprised of many thousands of people, from dedicated and expert teachers and school leaders, to caring parents and families investing in their local schools, to creative and flexible administrative staff who are resilient and responsive in the face of diminishing resources.

The Charter school sector is also a core contributor. Charter school performance is mixed, but high-quality charter schools, like the best District schools, offer tremendous opportunities for great education. In particular, some of the most successful efforts at turning around persistently low-performing city schools are led by charter operators.

Given the need to dramatically improve the quality of school options in Philadelphia and serve well our underserved children – and in order to avoid duplication, unhelpful and damaging competition, and to make the highest and best use of scarce public dollars – we need to create a more coordinated, equity-driven arrangement of our schools. Fairness can't be left to chance or the "invisible hand" of the market.

What will such a system look like? Action Plan 3.0 lays out the essential elements.

The values that drive our work

As with prior versions, our Action Plan advances a set of values. We believe that:

- 1) All students can and will learn – We care deeply about each student, and we believe that every student has the potential to learn at high levels. We believe the culture, language, and background that each child brings to school are strengths to build upon, and that we have a responsibility to meet each student’s educational needs and goals and provide a safe and engaging environment.
- 2) High quality instruction is at the core of our work – We believe in the persistent pursuit of excellence in teaching and expertise in content. We strive to deliver instruction that reflects high expectations for learning, that inspires students to meet high standards, and that sparks passionate and joyful interest in learning. We believe in the power of teachers and the principals who support them to provide transformative instructional experiences for all children.
- 3) Schools are learning organizations – We believe in cultivating respectful and productive relationships amongst all stakeholders that promote critical reflection, shared accountability, and continuous improvement. We are committed to constantly improving the performance of each person and each system within the organization.
- 4) Parents and families are our partners – Parents and families are the primary custodians of their child’s learning. We believe that our role is to work in partnership with parents and families to provide students with the education they need and deserve.
- 5) We are trusted stewards of public resources – We believe that all District staff are responsible stewards of existing resources whereby all expenditure decisions – no matter how large or small –are aligned with and help to advance the District’s strategic priorities. It is equally important that we operate in manner that ensures fiscal and financial stability.

Building on our successes

Action Plan 3.0 celebrates and commits to our continued program of work, and ongoing focus on teaching and the classroom. We will continue to refine instructional practices in all our classrooms. We will continue our transition to the Pennsylvania Core Standards, with their emphasis on high-level content and problem-solving skills. We will continue our work ensuring healthy, safe, joyful school climates. We will continue refining all hiring practices, including for great principals and great teachers. We will continue to focus on improving our service to parents and families, and our core operational school services. We will continue innovating school models to meet the needs of all students.

The School District of Philadelphia Anchor Goals

- 100% of students will graduate, ready for college and career
- 100% of 8-year-olds will read on grade level
- 100% of schools will have great principals and teachers
- SDP will have 100% of the funding we need for great schools, and zero deficit

Through all of this, we will continue our strongly held aspiration to achieve all four Anchor Goals around college- and career-readiness, grade-level literacy, great educators and administrators, and adequate resources and smart spending. Everything we do will remain connected to achieving these goals.

Enhancing what we are doing: the path forward

The District will take decisive action to deepen our focus on core competencies and areas of natural strength, and also redistribute resources (dollars and energy) towards areas of greatest need.

The primary way we will accomplish this focus and specialization will be the establishment of a reorganized set of school divisions, or “networks.” We will reorient our current eight networks into Neighborhood Networks, covering the same geographies and catering exclusively to the neighborhood catchment schools attended by more than half of all students in the city. Not only have parents indicated a desire for great neighborhood schools, ample evidence now exists that parents select schools primarily based on geography (which suggests a moral imperative to deliver great schools close to home). Our eight networks will deploy added expertise to strengthen and support neighborhood schools, providing a safe and nurturing learning environment for all students who want to attend. The doors of neighborhood schools will always be open to all.

Schools in Neighborhood Networks will benefit from the direct guidance and support of District management, and may also opt to adopt new instructional models through the School Redesign Initiative.

Alongside our geographically bound Neighborhood Networks, we will establish specialized networks, each requiring distinct expertise, management, oversight, and resourcing. In order to dramatically accelerate our improvement efforts in our lowest performing schools, we will create the Turnaround Network. Building on all that we have learned from five years of the Renaissance program, and incorporating and refining our Promise Academies, the Turnaround Network will have the necessary infrastructure and know-how to support dramatic improvement in schools with chronic underperformance. We will provide expert oversight of schools challenged with improving student outcomes, and operate the schools through an innovative combination of directly-run schools (like our current Promise Academies), schools operated by highly successful external operators, and Renaissance charter schools. The Turnaround Network will incorporate bolstered collaboration among Renaissance charter, external provider-operated, and District schools.

The Opportunity Network will be another new specialized grouping. Incorporating and building on the successes of our Alternative Education work, including the multiple pathways to graduation and accelerated programs, the Opportunity Network will continue strong participation in the nationally recognized citywide collaborations (Project U-Turn, the Council for College and Career Success) to support “opportunity youth” – including those young people who are overage and under-credit, or suspended or expelled, or already detached from school. This Network will incorporate the evidence emerging from national efforts, pilots, and programs focused on opportunity youth.

A last specialty network will cater to our small but growing cluster of innovative school models. This Innovation Network will comprise the heart of the District’s research and development efforts, and will build on and expand our commitment to new school models, as exemplified in the inquiry-based Science Leadership Academy, the project-based Workshop School, and three new competency-based high schools: Building 21, the LINC and the U-school. The Innovation Network will support these innovative efforts as well as scale and replicate new school models and model components that prove successful.

In addition to these Neighborhood and specialty networks, and in order to provide some additional management capacity to focus on these specialized needs, the District plans to accord near-total autonomy to select high-performing schools, which will be granted a per-pupil funding allocation and charter-like flexibilities. We will launch a planning effort at once to establish guidelines and criteria, including where flexibility will be limited (e.g., legal and contractual mandates), and by what criteria schools will qualify (e.g., by attaining a “model” ranking on the School Progress Report, or if they are selective admission).

Clearly this new school organization structure will require some changes in our service-oriented support for schools. Over time, we anticipate a full transition to a “shared services” model, including fee-for-service for some functions. While planning for such a responsive shared service center gets underway, we will continue to deepen our core functional expertise in five prioritized areas: teaching, behavioral health, Special Education, English Language Learners, and early childhood.

While redoubling District efforts, we will seek to selectively expand the charter sector in the areas where the city needs it. As described above, we will advocate focusing any charter sector growth on our Renaissance charter

turnaround schools, which maintain our legacy of neighborhood schools that are open to all. In addition, we will continue to pursue the closure of low-performing charter schools, and promote the expansion of Philadelphia’s highest-performing citywide, lottery admission charter schools, and the select creation of new high-performing charter schools.

The funding we need

Our plan to focus, specialize, and coordinate in the interests of every student relies on a second core element: obtaining the necessary, recurring funding. To this end, the District remains committed to getting necessary structural budget fixes that allow us to break the cycle of fiscal deficit and hardship. These structural budget fixes include a fair, student-weighted funding formula at the state; a revised charter school per-pupil allocation formula, one that more fairly distributed special education funding based on student disability; pension relief; new, recurring revenues from the city and state; and others.

A note on teaching

We have tremendous respect for our teachers. Leaders of the District have had the recent privilege, alongside our colleagues in the PFT, of visiting many schools and conducting listening sessions among teachers. Teachers shared a great many ideas during these sessions and an inspiring breadth of constructive perspectives.

We heard that teachers want a contract, so we remain at the table with the PFT working to negotiate a fair agreement that protects due process rights and the needs of children. We heard that teachers want high-quality development and career-advancement opportunities in their schools, so we are working to facilitate more teacher collaboration time, more coaching in schools and classrooms, and opening up more leadership opportunities for teachers. We heard that teachers need curriculum resources and basic supplies, so we are providing grade-level reading libraries for the schools that most need them, laptops for all teachers in elementary schools to facilitate the use of literacy software among other things, and a higher supply allocation in schools.

We also clearly heard that teachers want to be respected as professionals. So we are excited to facilitate and promote teacher leadership in a number of domains, including teacher-led professional development, and continuing the teacher-network-led citywide convenings focused on standards and curriculum.

We will continue to work with and alongside our teachers to better the science and art of teaching in all classrooms.

* * * * *

In the pages that follow, we describe the 25 actions that comprise the heart of Action Plan 3.0 and make real the vision described above. The plan is a pivot into a more urgent and deeply specialized approach at a time when the District, while still without the resources we need, has a balanced budget for the first time in years. We are proud of our work. We can and must do so much more, as a city, as a state, as a public school sector. Action Plan 3.0 attempts to push further toward equity and excellence in all schools and in how we support them.

The Plan

I. An equitable system of schools

The School District of Philadelphia is a school operator and a central coordinator and facilitator. It is our role to ensure that scarce resources dedicated for public education are put to their highest and best use. It is our role to ensure that every child – regardless of life circumstances, zip code, behavioral challenges, or disability – has access to great schools.

Action 1. Maintain a system of great schools with the school models and programs we need to serve all students equitably.

- a. **Reinvest in Networks of local, neighborhood schools, open to all students.** Our Neighborhood Networks will be made up of catchment area schools, serving families who want good neighborhood options. We will aim to increase enrollment and improve programming at these District-run schools. Schools in these networks will either be *traditional*, following District curricula and development plans, or *School Redesign Initiative schools* with specific flexibilities based on local school community designs. The Neighborhood Networks will build upon the District’s focused teaching and learning activities, existing community partnerships, and organic organizing efforts by parents and parents-to-be in support of their neighborhood public schools.

Survey results locally and nationally confirm that school location is among the key factors parents consider when selecting a school for their child. Analysis of enrollment decisions by families of 11,000 students impacted by school closures in Chicago found that “proximity to home was the deciding factor in most enrollment decisions. Whether they enrolled in a designated welcoming school, a higher-rated school, or a lower-rated school, most families based their decision first and foremost on location.”¹

“The community is great. My son loves having lots of friends in the neighborhood. I love that the demographics of the school match the demographics of the neighborhood – the school is incredibly diverse.”

- Elementary School Parent

- b. **Dramatically improve our lowest-performing schools by creating and investing in a Turnaround Network, comprised of District-run, evidence-based turnaround model(s); proven external provider-run turnaround models; and Renaissance charter turnarounds.** As demonstrated both locally and nationally, turning around chronically low-performing schools requires deep expertise, experience, and sustained focus. The Turnaround Network will bring this focused attention to transforming our lowest performing schools through a combination of *charter-operated Renaissance schools*, *proven external turnaround providers*, and *District-run turnaround schools* based on and evolving from our Promise Academies that adhere to a strict, evidence-based model. Schools in the Turnaround Network will be held harmless from additional interventions for three years to allow the turnaround effort to take hold.

There are national examples of district-run turnaround success, including the public-school-operated innovation zone, or “iZone,” schools in Memphis. All 17 iZone schools have made significant progress, with average test score gains of 10 percentage points per year, and half of the iZone schools are on-track to move into the top quarter of schools statewide within five years.² Here in Philadelphia, an internal evaluation conducted by the SDP Office of Research and Evaluation in 2014 found that the Renaissance Schools have continued to implement their turnaround models with fidelity, yielding examples of several helpful best practices that could be applied to future turnaround situations.³ Mastery Charter Schools has achieved notable turnaround and sustained success, posting double-digit gains in academics, reducing violent incidents, and retaining the vast majority of students post-turnaround. Last year, Mastery Gratz

High School achieved the greatest increase on the state’s School Performance Profile of any public school in Philadelphia.⁴ The Promise Academy in-District turnarounds also experienced significant gains in reading and math proficiency during the first year of implementation. Unfortunately, significant budget cuts during the second year of implementation for the first cohort of schools led to the elimination of key elements of the Promise Academy model, including extended school day, Saturday academies, summer professional development, and significant levels of staff turnover.⁵

- c. **Review and improve the provision of schooling for “opportunity youth” who are at risk or already detached from schooling by establishing an Opportunity Network, comprised of District-run and external-provider alternative education options.** Re-engaging students who have dropped out, or are at risk of dropping out, is highly specialized work, requiring expertise in working with students who are overage, behind academically, and often facing major life challenges (e.g., high mobility, foster care or juvenile justice system involvement, parenting, needing to work to support family members). Due to heralded efforts including the District’s Multiple Pathways to Graduation programs (e.g., accelerated schools, re-engagement center, and “twilight” programs), as well as Project U-Turn, we have a strong infrastructure to build on in creating such an Opportunity Network. We will focus on expanding our successful District-run programs and ensuring that all of our contract options are delivering the best possible outcomes for students.

The return on investment for ensuring that students complete high school is significant: on average, students who do not earn a high school diploma lose \$700,000 in lifetime income versus students who do; have significantly higher unemployment rates; and have a shorter life expectancy.⁶

Nationally, public and private partners have seen successful results through collaborative strategies to support opportunity youth. In New York City, small and academically rigorous Transfer Schools have been successful at re-engaging students who are behind academically or have dropped out. Transfer School students attend school more often (78% attendance, compared to 40% at their previous schools), and graduate at a higher rate than opportunity youth who attend traditional high schools (56% compared to 19%).⁷ A 2010 study found that the six-year graduation rate for the three highest performing transfer schools outpaced the average six-year graduation rate for traditional high schools by 50%, 32%, and 31%, respectively.⁸

A study of the 10 accelerated high schools overseen by the District and operated by external providers found that students who remain enrolled in these schools for at least one full calendar year perform better than similar students enrolled in neighborhood high schools.⁹ Several of these programs are moving more than two thirds of students two or more grade levels in reading and math in one year.¹⁰

- d. **Establish and nurture an Innovation Network of new, evidence-based school models, and continuously evaluate the schools to inform future plans for replication and transformation.** Our students have different backgrounds, experiences, skills, interests, and learning styles. We can best support our diverse student population by implementing a variety of instructional strategies and offering learning opportunities that keep students engaged. In the continued evolution of the School District, we know not all schools will look the same, and that new approaches to structuring instructional time, grouping students and teachers, and using technology will best enable us to meet students where they are. We will pilot evidence-based personalized learning models, and scale the ones that work. The Office of New School Models will continue to evaluate the competency-based models at our new high schools, review exemplar models to pilot, and identify technology tools that support personalized learning.

Transitioning away from seat time, in favor of a structure that creates flexibility, allows students to progress as they demonstrate mastery of academic content, regardless of time, place, or pace of learning. This type of learning – where the content is relevant to each student, and the method and pace are tailored to his or her unique needs – leads to better student engagement and better student outcomes.¹¹

Since 2002, the New York City Department of Education has opened 200 new, small high schools of choice, the majority of which were located in neighborhoods where large, failing high schools were closed. These new, small schools of choice have substantially increased the number of graduates with Regents diplomas; produced marked increases in graduation rates for every student subgroup studied; and students at these schools earn more credits per year, are more likely to enroll in college, and are less likely to need remediation once in college.¹²

"I am learning so much during the day that sometimes at night I feel like a different person."

- Student at an innovative High School

- e. **Over time, offer the option of 100% autonomy to certain District-run schools, including a per-student funding allocation and Charter-like flexibilities.** Consistent with our differentiated approach to supporting schools, and following a thoughtful planning process, we will offer certain schools the opportunity to opt-out of certain District-wide programs and offerings including, for example, District-wide professional development, curriculum, and budgeting requirements. These schools would continue to participate in the District-wide admissions and enrollment process, use the District's core foundational systems (including, likely, the Student Information System and the HR/Finance system) and Code of Student Conduct, and adhere to all Federal and state mandates and collective bargaining agreements. Autonomous schools also will continue to be held accountable for meeting our goals for student learning. The planning process will include developing criteria for what schools would be eligible for the option of autonomy. For example, eligible schools could include School Progress Report Model schools, or could include some categories of schools, such as selective or citywide admission schools. The specific eligibility requirements, along with exact autonomies, will be determined over the coming year.

A recent analysis of school-level autonomy across 40-plus countries found that increasing autonomy improves student achievement in developed countries: "in high-income countries, increased autonomy over academic content, personnel, and budgets exerts positive effects on student achievement. In general, the autonomy effects are most pronounced in decision-making on academic content, with some additional relevance for personnel autonomy and, less so, for budgetary autonomy."¹³ Research also demonstrates that, depending on a school system's starting point, the nature of activity needed to accelerate progress varies: good school systems become great when high levels of autonomy are granted to leaders.¹⁴

"Schools need to be more autonomous – faculty and leadership should decide key initiatives, culture, and curriculum. Schools are diverse and know, and can plan, for the needs of students. The District should allow schools to take goals of the District and make them applicable to students in that school."

- High School Teacher

- f. **Annually collect and analyze data on school progress and release a School Progress Report for each school.** We have developed a School Progress Report (SPR) to measure, communicate, and hold ourselves accountable for the performance of both District and charter schools on multiple dimensions – academic achievement, academic progress, climate, and (for high schools only) college and career readiness – that reflect the richness and complexity of the educational experience. The SPR puts the most emphasis on progress, reflecting our focus on and commitment to ensuring that all of our students are learning. We use the SPR to celebrate schools that are meeting or exceeding a standard of educational excellence for all students; to identify, so we can learn from, principals and teachers who are realizing exceptional success in serving particular student populations or establishing a positive school climate; and to identify schools needing additional interventions and supports.

School report cards can help increase transparency, establish a basis for accountability, and provide tools for effective management, ultimately helping parents, teachers, and school officials assess school performance and status, and develop the most effective interventions and supports.¹⁵

- g. **Promote compelling, successful programs including Career and Technical Education, AP and IB courses, and project-based learning.** We will continue to increase enrollment in and access to relevant high-quality programs that support student learning, and improve academic and employment outcomes, by both promoting existing programs with additional capacity and expanding programs that have proven successful. In partnership with the business community, we will increase the number of students earning industry credentials – reflecting Philadelphia's high-priority, growing occupations – while developing guidelines on effective teaching methods to ensure the highest quality of programming options. We will continue to develop “career pathways” with employers, which can include pre-apprenticeships and registered apprenticeships. We will expand access to AB and IB courses, and also the use of project-based learning.

The School District offers 111 CTE programs in 37 occupational areas across 28 high schools. A recent evaluation of the performance of students in these programs shows higher graduation rates (four-year graduation rate of 84% for CTE students, compared to 62% for non-CTE students), lower drop-out rates, and little-to-no “achievement gap” compared to non-CTE students.¹⁶

Students who participate in project-based learning classes tend to perform better on assessments of content knowledge, had high levels of engagement, and benefitted from improved critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaborative skills.¹⁷

“This year I took an AP environmental science class and now I am an environmentalist and [will be] pursuing a college degree in the sciences. Science has become the basis of my life and also one of my strongest passions.”

- High School Student

- h. **Through the School Redesign Initiative, provide evidence-based opportunities for school communities and partners to transform themselves to meet the needs of the students they serve.** The School Redesign Initiative (SRI) is a call to our talented, committed educators, our parents and families, and our community partners to lead the critical work of redesigning our neighborhood schools to meet the demands of the 21st century. SRI is grounded in research-based design principles for high-performing schools regarding instructional model, youth development, mission and culture, talent, family and community engagement, and continuous improvement, and reflects lessons learned from prior and ongoing transformation efforts.

Research shows that critical factors such as committed and visionary leadership, curricular coherence, family and community engagement, school climate, and professional capacity¹⁸ are fundamental to school improvement.¹⁹

- i. **Create a service delivery model pilot program to explore offering best-in-class District services on a fee-for-service basis, including to non-District schools.** With diminished resources, and robust marketplaces for many operational and support functions, our services must be school- and customer-oriented, and best in class. To help us enhance our customer service orientation, we will pilot a fee-for-service approach in a selected operational or support function, which would be available to schools across the city, whether or not District-managed.

A 2012 State of Ohio report on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of local government and educational services identified shared services as a way to “assist schools and local governments in

upholding the integrity of their individual missions, while reducing the overhead of administrative services and other general operating costs . . . and improve service delivery.”²⁰

Denver Public Schools, which has piloted a service delivery model, explains that: “placing purchasing power in the hands of school leaders, [creates] incentives [] to further motivate central office departments to adopt more customer-focused, service-oriented organizations.”²¹

“[Central office] departments should sit down with teachers to understand the constraints and build collaborative systems and practices.”

- High School Teacher

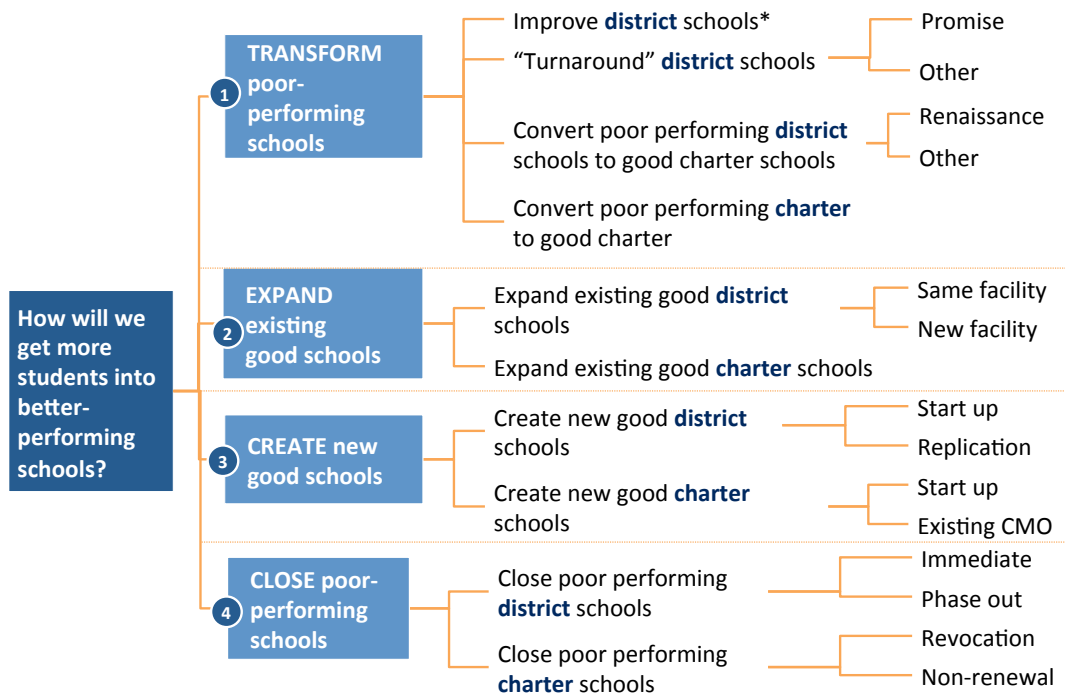
- j. **Invest the time and resources we need to reorient our organization to support the System of Great Schools.** Implementation of our System of Great Schools approach requires us to act with both urgency and due care. We anticipate full implementation over a multi-year period, identifying immediate, mid-term, and long-term actions. We understand the critical challenge of ensuring all our colleagues understand the vision, and how their work supports it. Importantly, we will work hard to identify the changes in behavior that will allow us to support this work, and make appropriate plans to adopt and support those behavior changes.

Implementation – defined as “efforts designed to get evidence-based programs or practices of known dimensions into use via effective change strategies” – is essential to program success.²² An intervention put in place with an implementation team and effective use of implementation science and practice achieved 80% efficacy within three years; whereas an intervention put in place without an implementation team achieved only 14% efficacy over a 17-year period.²³

- k. **Continuously update and refine the System of Great Schools plan, including expansion and replication of good schools, and transformation or closure of chronically under-enrolled and under-performing schools.** We continue to develop a comprehensive, evidence-based, transparent decision-making system for all our schools to ensure that good schools are supported and promoted, good schooling ideas flourish, and poor-performing schools are not left to languish. To this end, we will continue to implement a comprehensive way of making decisions about our system of schools, including transparent processes, clear expectations, and follow-up actions.

The School District of Philadelphia has some of the best performing schools in the state; we have selective admission schools; we have career academies and neighborhood schools; we also have schools struggling to get more than 50% of their students reading and completing math on grade level. Therefore, in order to support all of our students we must simultaneously review schools on an individual basis but also as a collective.

A System of Great Schools: Options To Get More Students into Good Schools



* Improving district schools accounts for the vast majority of SDP’s overall efforts.

Action 2. Be a great charter school authorizer to ensure all charters are good school options, and promote the sharing of successful practices across all schools.

We will support the School Reform Commission (SRC) in becoming a top-quality charter school authorizer by improving the quality, clarity, transparency, and consistency of the SRC’s charter school authorizing practices through the Authorizing Quality Initiative (AQI). Consistent with the System of Great Schools approach, the SRC will both promote and expand high-quality charter school options and actively seek the non-renewal and revocation of charter schools not meeting performance standards. Starting this year, the majority of charter schools in Philadelphia will receive a School Progress Report, helping to facilitate apples-to-apples comparisons between schools serving similar populations and to identify promising practices that can and should be shared between sectors.

Quality authorizing is essential to ensuring that charter schools provide high-quality options for students. A 2014 report found that approximately 20% of charter schools opened in Michigan between 2011 and 2014 were authorized by authorizers ranked “D” or “F” on a scorecard assessing charter school operator quality, performance standards, and improvement of chronically failing schools.²⁴ As the report explains, “the implications of poor authorizing decisions are enormous. More than \$1 billion in public investment to improve the state’s education is being undermined by some charter schools that are doing little more than replicating failure for students who need – often desperately – access to high-performing public education.”²⁵

II. District schools for student success

As a school operator, the School District of Philadelphia continues to celebrate our successful schools and school programs, expanding and replicating them, and continues to focus on dramatic improvements in our core functions: teaching across all schools and grades, behavioral health (and school climate) in all our schools, Special Education, English Language Learning, and early childhood education. We are working hard to make all the schools we run great.

A. Teaching

Action 3. Provide excellent teaching in all classrooms.

- a. **Consistently promote excellent instruction through a clear vision for achievement and strong and productive feedback to teachers.** Recognizing that quality instruction is essential to student success, we will continue to support teachers in the implementation of research-based Highly Effective Instructional Practices.²⁶ Our principals, supported by their Assistant Superintendents, will provide timely, actionable feedback to teachers tied to these Practices and the High Performing School Practices.

Research confirms that “[t]eachers matter more to student achievement than any other aspect of schooling.... When it comes to student performance on reading and math tests, a teacher is estimated to have two to three times the impact of any other school factor, including services, facilities, and even leadership.”²⁷

- b. **Create meaningful opportunities for principal and for teacher collaboration focused on teaching.** We are encouraging principals to form professional development cohorts to share and adopt best practices from each other’s schools. We will also facilitate grade group, peer group, and cross-grade meetings to offer teachers the opportunity to plan together and share strategies, leveraging their rich perspectives and experiences to collectively solve difficult challenges. Finally, we will continue to prioritize opportunities for teachers to observe and provide feedback to each other.

In a qualitative study of teacher experiences across Philadelphia, researchers found broad variation across schools’ networking environments, but found that teachers desired networking and collaboration regarding use of student data, classroom management, integration of technology into classroom instruction, content instruction, differentiation, and student interventions and supports. They also determined that providing formal time for teachers to network with each other benefits the school culture.²⁸

“There isn’t enough time for teachers to help and provide feedback to each other or collaborate as a team. We’re not as strong of a team as we could be because of all the constraints.”

- High School Teacher

- c. **Supply assessment results in a timely manner through updated student- and teacher-facing data systems so as to inform instructional planning.** We are enhancing our unified system for collecting and maintaining student information across the District. Maintenance of data within a single system will allow for more reliable data, real-time reporting of system, school, and classroom-level performance against instructional standards, and the identification of instructional focus areas for individual students.

Strong organizations understand their goals and track progress in order to justify decisions and make necessary course corrections. Effective collection and timely review of data can help drive instructional and curricular changes, student interventions, and resource-allocation decisions.²⁹

- d. **Enhance implementation of Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS,³⁰ also known as RtII).** We will invest in and adopt universal screeners; identify proven and preferred interventions; provide and support professional development for school-based staff, including at the school level; and invest in improvements of the supporting documentation system.

Effective, coordinated use of MTSS can improve the academic performance of at-risk students, particularly in early literacy³¹ and, through proactive intervention, can reduce the incidence of students being identified as requiring special needs.³²

Action 4. Implement a flexible curriculum aligned to the PA Core Standards.

- a. **Align curricula, assessments, and materials to the PA Core Standards, providing an appropriately paced and rigorous framework that allows for flexibility in instructional delivery.** Beginning in SY14-15, the District introduced a Curriculum Engine aligned to the PA Core Standards, which lays out instructional standards according to a scope and sequence delineated by quarter. These standards are linked to resources and materials on an online platform to assist instructional staff in adapting curricular guidelines to their students' needs. While the SY14-15 scope and sequence included only Math and English Language Arts, similar guidance and resources will be added for Science and Social Studies for SY15-16.

Core standards, including the PA Core Standards, place a greater emphasis on higher order cognitive demand compared to state standards prior to states' alignment with the Common Core.³³

- b. **Align graduation standards based on student mastery of content, drawing on the PA Core Standards' description of a college- and career-ready student.** To guide our students towards success in the 21st Century, we need standards not only defined by content knowledge and foundational skills, but also informed by such key skills as creativity and innovation, critical thinking and problem solving, and communication and collaboration.³⁴ We will also assess what content knowledge, foundational skills, and other skills students need to have by the end of middle school in order to make a successful transition to high school.

A study analyzing typical tasks in the American workplace found that more and more jobs require workers to "bring facts and relationships to bear in problem solving, the ability to judge when one problem-solving strategy is not working and another should be tried, and the ability to engage in complex communication with others."³⁵

"Education is the most powerful thing a person can ever obtain. Having a great education can take you places you've dreamed of going. I believe that education leads to better grades, which lead you to college."

- High School Student

Action 5. Promote a literacy-rich continuum from preK through Grade 3, including recuperative practices.

- a. **Ensure alignment of curricular standards from preK through Grade 3.** As we align our curricular standards to the PA Core Standards, significant efforts have been made to ensure a continuous scope and sequence that back-map through preK. PreK teachers within the District will continue to be integrated into the professional community of a school and provided opportunities to collaborate with their K-12 colleagues to build shared understanding of the developmental capabilities and assessment techniques that lay the foundation for an instructional continuum. Meanwhile, we will promote data sharing and training opportunities to more effectively align the learning standards of non-District preK providers with our own standards.

According to brain research from Harvard's Center on the Developing Child, students' developmental abilities are built "from the bottom up" and require proper scaffolding in order to develop more advanced skills and circuits over time.³⁶

- b. **Integrate the Comprehensive Literacy Framework in all preK through Grade 3 classrooms.** The Comprehensive Literacy Framework promotes a shared understanding and approach to teaching early literacy through a gradual release, workshop model with time spent alternatingly in whole group, small group, and independent settings during daily 120-minute literacy blocks. Students receive differentiated instruction based on their needs and their progress is monitored to ensure they are receiving the appropriate interventions to achieve established growth targets.

The amount of time spent reading is a major contributor to increased vocabulary and comprehension. Setting aside sufficient time to practice newly learned skills is particularly important for struggling readers.³⁷

- c. **Working with our preK partners, expand availability and access to high quality preK programs to increase Kindergarten readiness.** We will continue to pursue federal, state, and local funding opportunities to grow the number of preK seats, particularly in underserved communities. We will continue to contract with high-quality partners to help meet growing demand. We will streamline the application and eligibility determination process for families, while investigating alternative delivery models such as blended learning and family care. Finally, we will increase performance and compliance in all preK programs we manage and fund by improving business processes to allow for timely identification and remediation of areas of weakness.

Preliminary results from the State's Kindergarten Entry Inventory (KEI) indicate that at least 50% of District Kindergarten students began school in SY14-15 without the cognitive and non-cognitive skills to be considered "school-ready."³⁸ Meanwhile, of the approximately 11,000 Kindergarten students in the 2014-15 cohort for whom information about early educational experience is known, approximately 30% had no formal pre-Kindergarten experience; among those with such experience, 32% participated in a District managed or contracted preK program.³⁹

High-quality pre-K is one of the most effective means we have to reduce the achievement gap and prepare students to succeed in school and in life. Participants are less likely to require remediation or enter the juvenile justice system, and they graduate high school and attend college at higher rates.⁴⁰

Action 6. Provide specialized learning experiences for students who need them.

- a. **Provide high quality services to special education students in the least restrictive environment, supported by collaboration between general education and special education teachers.** We will develop a framework that outlines key practices for effectively teaching and supporting students with special needs, and also will provide clarifying guidance on the Permission to Evaluate (PTE) process. We will support both special education and general education teachers in the delivery of core content with appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities in an inclusion setting. We will promote network-level examination of best practices and challenges in schools with large proportions of students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), as well as increase collaboration between general education and special education teachers through professional development in inclusive practices, lesson planning, co-teaching models, and school rostering.

Educating students with special needs along with general education students has been found to deliver benefits to students with particular needs without diminishing the academic progress of their general education peers.⁴¹

“With an inclusion model, we need to have professional development for regular education teachers on how to welcome special education students in; we also need professional development for classroom assistants.”

- Elementary School Teacher

b. Support rigorous and linguistically appropriate learning experiences for English Language Learners (ELLs).

Expanding on the success of the District’s bilingual pilot program, we will improve and expand these programs, focusing on supporting the conversion of transitional programs to dual-language-model programs that produce fully bilingual and bi-literate students. As we do this, we will establish and publish a framework for most effectively working with multilingual students, aligning teacher coaching and curriculum development to the goal of increasing student conversation in ESOL classrooms. Finally, we will promote network-level sharing of our performance and successful practices in serving our multilingual students, implementing strategic supports to improve service delivery where indicated.

A recent study that tracked nine cohorts of students over 12 years showed that despite taking longer to reclassify to “fluent English proficient” status, Latino English Language Learners who were enrolled in dual-language programs developed greater fluency both in their native language and in English by the end of high school.⁴²

Action 7. Recognize, respond to, and support the social-emotional and behavioral health needs of our students.

a. Equip staff to recognize and appropriately address students’ social-emotional and behavioral needs through trauma-informed practices.

Many of our students have experienced and/or continue to experience the detrimental effects of trauma. To help mitigate the impact that these experiences have on our students’ academic success, we will train our staff to understand and respond to trauma and, where appropriate, incorporate social-emotional learning (SEL) and conflict resolution into the curriculum.

According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), “many risky behaviors (e.g., drug use, violence, bullying and dropping out) can be prevented or reduced when multiyear, integrated efforts are used to develop students’ social and emotional skills.”⁴³ Whether intentionally or not, students readily pick up social-emotional learning skills from their teachers. “Students learn from the way teachers manage frustration, maintain control of themselves and the classroom, stay focused in the face of distractions, and shift tactics when needed.”⁴⁴

b. Integrate a focus on “academic tenacity” throughout students’ educational experience. Academic tenacity refers to mindsets and skills that allow students to look beyond short-term concerns to focus on and work through challenges in pursuit of longer-term, higher-order goals. Because such non-cognitive skills are critical for ongoing academic success, we will promote academic tenacity by upholding rigorous academic standards, promoting a growth mindset with ambitious learning goals, while supporting students through positive motivational practices.⁴⁵

Research suggests that non-cognitive skills are linked to students’ academic outcomes and behavior. For example, a 2014 study found that growth mindset, grit, self-control, and conscientiousness “help to explain the proximate outcomes of student behavior and test-score gains in middle school.”⁴⁶

“Every time I am debating whether to do homework or a project the first thing that comes to mind is ‘How am I going to college if I do not do my work?’ Whenever I make a choice I always reflect my answer on a goal I want to accomplish later on in life.”

- High School Student

- c. **Implement and maintain age-appropriate, school-wide climate plans that incorporate evidence-based programs and practices.** We will provide professional development opportunities to school-based staff in setting and reinforcing clear norms and expectations as a means for promoting constructive climates. We will also continue to implement such programs as Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) and restorative practices, capturing evidence and data to determine whether expansion of these programs is indicated.

School climate and safety have been linked to improved student achievement; reduced vandalism, absenteeism and disciplinary incidents; and higher teacher retention and satisfaction.⁴⁷ A 2013 study in California demonstrated that schools that consistently “beat the odds” (based on student demographic factors such as poverty, racial composition, and proportion of English language learners and students with special needs) were consistently those with positive school climate.⁴⁸

- d. **Equip staff and students to implement the Bullying and Harassment Policies with fidelity.** We will provide mandatory training for all staff and students on the identification, reporting and proper response to bullying and harassment, including sexual harassment. We will continue to identify and make available anti-bullying and harassment programming for incorporation into the curriculum.

In a recent survey of 7th and 8th grade students at two District schools, over 61% of the students surveyed reported being concerned about bullying at their school. Over 50% of the students reported being a victim of peer aggression/bullying, and approximately 40% reported being a perpetrator of peer aggression/bullying, at least one time in the prior month. More than 80% of students indicated that other students at school do nothing to try to stop bullying, and 40% of students indicated that teachers and other adults do nothing to try to stop bullying.⁴⁹

Action 8. Implement a coherent assessment system aligned to the PA Core Standards.

- a. **Adopt and implement a coherent assessment system that helps educators monitor student progress, informs instructional practices, and assists in the identification of appropriate interventions.** We are adopting a suite of skill and competency-based formative assessments to inform instructional planning, universal screeners to determine the need for interventions, diagnostic assessments to identify skill and knowledge gaps, benchmark assessments to track progress against adopted standards, and summative assessments to understand whether students have developed mastery over specified content areas.

A coherent assessment system – one which uses a combination of formative and summative assessments – makes it possible for educators to track and advance student learning throughout the year and to determine whether students have learned the necessary content by the end of the year.⁵⁰

- b. **Maintain data accuracy by ensuring that all instructional staff are trained to administer assessments to produce reliable and valid results.** In the past, District-wide assessments, such as the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) and the Diagnostic Reading Assessment (DRA), have not been administered with fidelity for reasons including insufficient training. To understand the effectiveness of our initiatives and make strategic adjustments to pursue improved outcomes, it is critical that we ensure the accuracy of our data and the appropriateness of its application across the system – in classrooms, schools, and the central administration.

The accuracy and accessibility of data, and technical support training, can impact educators’ ability to turn raw data into valid information and actionable knowledge. By ensuring appropriate training and support, data accuracy can be safeguarded and decision-makers can synthesize information, prioritize and weigh the relative merits of programs, assess the effectiveness of actions, and promote organizational improvement by increasing responsiveness to various types of data.⁵¹

B. School environment

Action 9. Provide well-resourced, clean, comfortable, healthy, and safe school environments conducive to teaching and learning.

- a. **Provide teachers with the materials and supplies required to effectively teach students.** For teachers to perform the essential functions of educating students, they need basic materials and supplies. Currently, many of our teachers purchase materials such as pencils, crayons, and books using their own resources. We will develop a list of foundation materials and supplies that all teachers need and work to ensure that all of our schools are provided with an adequate amount of these resources.

In feedback gathered at multiple listening sessions across District schools, teachers indicated that a lack of basic materials and supplies hampers their ability to do their jobs. Some teachers explained that they are forced to make copies at night or on the weekends because they do not have paper and their schools do not have functioning copy machines.⁵²

“What the District could do to support me better in doing my work is to provide a functioning copier that prints duplex. The copier repairman is part of the school staff at this point.”

- Elementary School Teacher

- b. **Provide a clean and comfortable building environment in all schools.** We will perform a facility condition assessment that measures the cleanliness and physical safety of each school, develop a real property and space management plan, and increase staff training opportunities. We will strive to achieve and maintain APPA level 2 in all buildings by identifying areas requiring focused attention and treatment. While doing this work, we will align facility-related decisions with the educational goals of students based on their well-being and instructional setting.

School building design and building conditions have a measurable impact on student achievement. Researchers have found a “5-17 percentile point difference between students in poor buildings and those in standard buildings.”⁵³

“My school has a beautiful community garden run by the students but keeping our school beautiful is a major problem. My school just needs more help with keeping it clean.”

- High School Student

- c. **Prevent and remediate environmental health hazards, including asthma triggers.** We will operate facilities that are healthy for our students, teachers, and staff. We will correct mold findings identified through the NIOSH DMAT method in student-teacher areas and asthma triggers identified through a proactive Indoor Environmental Quality assessment using the EPA’s Tools for Schools approach. In addition, we will perform roof inspections to identify issues that could eventually lead to mold, continue to work to green school properties to improve recreational spaces and storm water management, and ensure that all external-facing doors are equipped with door sweeps as a means for preventing the entry of rodents.

Asthma is a “leading cause of school absenteeism due to a chronic condition, accounting for nearly 13 million missed school days per year.”⁵⁴ In Philadelphia, the rate of children’s asthma is even more problematic: current estimates suggest that 35,000 students citywide have asthma.⁵⁵ More than half of

Philadelphia children with asthma have gone to the emergency room in the last year for asthma-related treatment, compared to one-third of children with asthma in the surrounding suburban counties.⁵⁶

- d. **Focus capital investments in support of teaching and learning.** To improve the alignment between the Action Plan, school-level facility needs, and the resources available, we initiated a “capital budget call” enabling principals and central office administrators to identify needs for individual buildings and for the District as a whole, prioritizing projects that leverage existing District initiatives and investments in support our Anchor Goals. To ensure that we prioritize our investments, we will clearly define project eligibility for capital investments and establish a written rating and ranking process to evaluate capital budget and program requests against multiple factors, including a return-on-investment analysis.

Aligning decision-making on capital investments with larger organizational goals is a national best practice requiring capital planning policies that, according to the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA), can serve as an “essential framework for managing these tasks and for assuring that capital plans are consistent with overall organizational goals.” Recommended policies include a clear definition of what constitutes a capital improvement project and a structured process for prioritizing need and allocating limited resources.⁵⁷

- e. **Ensure that all schools have thorough, clear safety plans protecting the security of students and staff.** At times, our school-based staff are called upon to respond to emergency situations. To protect the safety of staff and students, we will ensure that all schools have safety plans that provide clear guidance to staff about how to respond in case of emergency, and that school-based staff receive appropriate training on implementing the plans as needed.

School safety and climate are essential elements of an environment that is conducive to learning.⁵⁸

Action 10. Improve the provision of services so students arrive in classrooms ready to learn.

- a. **Improve student nutrition and meal experience.** Through the Community Eligibility Provision of the national school breakfast and lunch programs, we are able to offer free breakfast and lunch to all students without the need for paper-based applications. As we do so, we will continue to improve student nutrition, student participation in meals, and customer satisfaction by transitioning schools, where possible, to full-service kitchens and by actively engaging students in making healthy dietary decisions through programming such as Eat Right Now.

A hungry or malnourished student cannot learn. Improved nutrition and participation in meals – especially breakfast – have been associated with increased academic performance, improved attendance, and decreased tardiness among school-age children.⁵⁹

- b. **Improve the quality of transportation services.** We remain committed to getting all students to school safely, on time, and with less than an hour of travel time. Given the above-noted importance of a healthy breakfast for student achievement, it is imperative that school buses arrive safely and on-time to enable participation in the school breakfast program. We will continue the process of installing GPS on all of our buses and work to optimize all of our route times. Additionally, we will review bell times and look into consolidating pick-up locations in the interest of providing much better transportation services to the majority of our student riders.

A recent research study on long bus rides indicated that students with “large average times on a bus report lower grades and poorer level of fitness, fewer social activities and poor study habits.”⁶⁰

Action 11. Create meaningful partnerships with parents and families.

- a. **Support multiple opportunities and models for parent and family engagement.** We will support and encourage parents’ efforts to be more actively and meaningfully engaged in supporting their children’s

schools. We have School Advisory Councils (SACs) in the majority of schools and will continue to expand SACs to include every school in the District. We will continue to increase support to parents participating in school-based family and parent groups, including Home and School Associations, and encourage “Friends of” groups.

Meaningful family engagement in schools enables our principals and educators to capitalize on our families’ knowledge of students and communities,⁶¹ which has been associated with improved academic, behavioral, and social outcomes for students.⁶²

“Friends groups reinforce the message of a neighborhood school being the center of a strong community. They provide a mechanism through which community resources can support a neighborhood school and for a school to communicate its needs and successes to the larger community to strengthen stakeholder relationships.”

– Member of “Friends of” Group

- b. **Provide parents with the information and tools to support their children’s academic progress.** Parent involvement is critical to children’s academic success. To ensure parents are equipped with the information they need to support their children’s education, we will work with teachers and principals to ensure that parents receive regular information about their students’ progress. Recognizing the importance of direct communications with our parents and guardians, we will continue to encourage parents and guardians to sign up for and regularly access our new Parent and Family Portal and continue to add services to the Portal. This spring, we will add the Parent Survey and the School Selection Notifications to the portal. We will provide parents with workshops, materials, and information regarding at-home support for student learning, aligned with student needs and District academic priorities. We will provide information and training to parents of students with disabilities regarding effective special education programming to further empower parents to serve as educational partners.

Parental involvement in schools better arms parents with the skills and information they need to assist their children academically.⁶³ Higher levels of parental involvement in schools predict greater social skills and higher mathematics achievement among children, and lower levels of disruptive behaviors.⁶⁴

“My child’s teacher also sends helpful information home at the end of the school year to help her [maintain] what she has learned throughout the school year. This is incredibly helpful because she does not have to waste the beginning of the next school year reviewing the previous school year.”

- School District Parent

- c. **Provide parents of preK through Grade 3 students with resources and activities to promote the development of language and literacy skills outside the classroom.** Parents are our students’ first teachers, from whom children learn their first words and develop attitudes and assumptions about learning, and with whom children typically communicate frequently than anyone else during their formative years. With over 50% of our students reading below grade level, parents are key partners in advancing students’ early literacy skills. We will engage parents in this effort by sharing tips and activities that can be used at home through text messages, our social media feeds, the READ! by 4th page on our website, during report card conferences, and in our regular encounters.

Researchers at the Temple University Infant and Child Laboratory have shown that simple interventions, such as asking children what they see while walking around a grocery store, are highly effective in developing children’s language skills.⁶⁵

- d. **Provide parents with the information they need to make informed choices about their children’s academic experience.** It is our responsibility to provide parents with accurate and high-quality information about school options and to actively reach out to parents to involve them in achieving the goals of their children’s schools. To ensure timely delivery of accurate and helpful information, we are implementing a multi-pronged communication plan to inform parents and families about the School Progress Report. We are researching and implementing national best practices for informing parents and families about school options and pursuing a user-friendly, equitable, and transparent school selection, transfer, and placement process.

For most parents, “school choice decisions are informed by their social network, school visits, and talks with teachers,” raising equity concerns about the ease of accessing correct information.⁶⁶ In a 2014 study by the Center for Reinventing Public Education, 28% of Philadelphia parents surveyed reported struggling to get information to make an informed school choice, the largest percentage of the cities surveyed.⁶⁷

Action 12. Connect schools with community resources and partnerships to meet student needs.

- a. **Encourage and facilitate the expansion and cultivation of partnerships that prove most effective in supporting students’ needs.** We will foster collaboration between school leaders, content specialists within central administration, and our partners to make informed decisions about the identification and deployment of effective partnerships to schools that need them. We will continue to collect information about existing partnerships, partners’ areas of strength, and our schools’ areas of needs (for example, out-of-school-time opportunities for students in middle school). Through the Office of Strategic Partnerships, we will direct resources in ways that are most equitable and impactful.

A system that embraces community partnerships is able to leverage the collective assets of a community to produced networked opportunities and supports for young people. For maximum effectiveness, “It is of paramount importance that all partners are explicit about their expectations as they establish relationships and design collective work.”⁶⁸

- b. **Improve communication and information sharing to increase alignment of resources and activities with partners who serve our students.** Partners working within our schools can be more effective in their work with our students if they have access to the skills and standards that are being taught during the school day. Similarly, both teachers and partners would benefit from sharing information about students’ progress in different contexts.

According to the Massachusetts Afterschool Research Study, programs with stronger relationships with school teachers and principals were more successful at improving student’s homework completion, homework effort, positive behavior and initiative.⁶⁹

- c. **Actively participate in and contribute to the Citywide READ! by 4th Campaign.** Led by the Free Library of Philadelphia, READ! by 4th is a collaboration of more than 50 organizations across Philadelphia, with the common goal of helping the city’s students reach the critical benchmark of reading proficiently before they enter 4th grade.⁷⁰

Campaigns for grade level reading have been organized at the state and/or local level in almost every state. Early gains include significant reductions in chronic absence and the introduction of numerous programs geared towards combatting summer learning loss.⁷¹

- d. **Mobilize and direct relevant community partners to most effectively advance students’ readiness for and access to college and career.** We will establish a plan for coordinating external organizations to address four priority areas: pre-college opportunities, college admissions and financial aid, higher education supports, and career development. In this effort, we are developing a list of key activities and experiences our students should be exposed to from grades 6 to 12, working with the Community College of Philadelphia to further

dual-enrollment and related opportunities, and leveraging the Philadelphia College Prep Roundtable to continuously engage key external stakeholders.

Organizations such as the Posse Foundation have significantly broken down barriers to college access and success for disadvantaged minority students. Through scholarship assistance, leadership training, and the establishment of strong peer support networks, Posse scholars have persisted and graduated college at a rate of over 90%.⁷²

C. People

Action 13. Identify and select exceptional principals, teachers, and other staff.

- a. **Improve recruitment practices to attract the highest quality candidates.** Attracting great teachers, principals, and other staff members to the School District is crucial to positively impacting students' learning outcomes. We will effectively use online platforms, social media such as LinkedIn, and in-person recruitment opportunities to publicize openings among diverse networks of qualified candidates. We will also collaborate with the City and partner organizations to better market Philadelphia and the School District as attractive choices for quality candidates.

Strong teachers and principals who can positively impact student learning are the most valuable resource for disadvantaged students. For example, students of teachers holding National Board certification are likely to outperform students of teachers without such certification.⁷³ In addition, high quality school leadership has an important impact on student learning. A study of Washington, D.C. public schools found that when low-performing schools were targeted for principal replacement, student achievement rose in both reading and math, with especially strong gains in the middle grades.⁷⁴

There is clear evidence that school districts can adopt policies that make them more attractive to prospective teachers, including strong teacher induction and mentoring programs, greater autonomy, and more administrative support.⁷⁵

- b. **Strengthen the principal and teacher pipelines both by identifying high-potential pools of external talent, and by cultivating and developing internal high performers for advancement.** As we continue to refine the specific skills and competencies we want our teachers and principals to demonstrate, we will leverage partnerships with organizations such as Teach for America, the Philadelphia Teacher Residency, and Temple University's residency program to supplement the teacher pipeline for hard-to-staff certification areas and priority areas, such as early literacy skills.

A survey of promising pipeline programs found successful recruitment of qualified teachers and principals who were prepared for work in disadvantaged schools required, among other things, a "compelling mission based on need" and a brand that will attract top-quality candidates.⁷⁶

- c. **Improve selection and hiring practices to ensure the right individuals are staffed in our schools.** To ensure that we have highly qualified staff and place them in positions where they can successfully impact student learning, we have implemented an applicant tracking system and we are developing performance-based application criteria, such as a video teaching sample for teacher candidates; training school leaders to become strong selectors of teacher talent; and accelerating the school-level budgeting process to enable an earlier, more competitive hiring timeline for quality candidates.

Research indicates that hiring delays lead to the loss of high-quality teacher candidates, who are more likely to accept other job offers in the interim.⁷⁷ Analysis from Memphis indicates that 60% of teachers hired in March, April, and May earned scores of 4 or 5 on a five-point performance scale, compared to only 40% of teachers hired in July.⁷⁸

“Principals have to be ‘master organizers’ who come up with a solution to every problem. They have to be trained as effective managers in order to go into a building and put structures into place and learn how to model those structures.”

- Middle School Principal

- d. **Integrate in the recruitment pipeline for early elementary school teachers a preference for candidates with demonstrated experience or certification in teaching preK through Grade 3 students.** To ensure a strong foundation for future academic success, instructional staff in our early grades need specialized training in pedagogy designed specifically for our youngest learners.

Early childhood education is a complex and growing field. Students require a strong foundation in both non-cognitive and cognitive skills before they can acquire more complex and higher-order skills.⁷⁹

Action 14. Support the continuous development of all personnel with high-quality training, evaluation, and job-embedded coaching.

- a. **Set clear expectations for teachers, principals, and support staff through faithful implementation of the Pennsylvania Educator Effectiveness System.** We know, and decades of research supports, that teachers matter more to student outcomes than any other in-school factor and that improving instructional effectiveness is critical to student success. To continue the implementation of the Educator Effectiveness System, we will provide ongoing training to teachers and principals about effective and impactful use of the Framework for Teaching, Student Learning Objectives, and student growth data; support struggling teachers with personalized professional development, including peer assistance; and, in accordance with proper procedures, use teacher evaluation data to drive decisions about hiring, promotion, and retention.

An evaluation of an evidence-based feedback pilot program in Chicago found that students experienced the highest growth in test scores when taught by teachers who had the highest ratings on the Danielson Framework (the same framework the School District currently employs).⁸⁰

- b. **Provide high-leverage professional development that supports teacher and principal growth and promotes effective instructional practices in every classroom.** Effectively supporting the ability of teachers and principals to improve their craft requires a variety of strategies and options. We will target the use of personalized coaching, including through continuation and expansion of the Teacher Ambassador and School-Based Teacher Leader programs, and through the development of school administrators in the areas of teacher observation, feedback, and coaching – all components of our research-based High Performing School Practices – to maximize the impact of this form of development. We will target professional development programming to the greatest areas of need based on Educator Effectiveness and PVAAS data. We will craft and implement a system for the review of planned district professional development sessions to ensure that training is of the highest quality. We will develop and implement communication strategies and peer networks to better publicize professional development opportunities and share best practices. Finally, we will operate a development and coaching program for new and novice principals, and participate in developing a Principal Leadership Academy for all principals, to catalyze principal growth and instructional leaders in the District.

A recent national study on teacher professional development identified five key characteristics of an ideal professional development experience: relevance, interaction, sustained over time, delivered by someone who understands the classroom experience, and delivered in a professional manner.⁸¹

“Not all professional development days are totally applicable for all grade types, so allowing for closer grade collaboration during professional development would be helpful.”

- Elementary School Teacher

- c. **Promote and support professional educator networks.** We will continue to promote and support the many formal and informal professional educator networks in Philadelphia. We will collaborate with partners including Temple University, the Philadelphia Education Fund, and others to expand existing partnerships and improve teacher preparation programs, professional development, and leadership opportunities.

Researchers have found that professional learning opportunities are more effective when teachers are actively involved in their own learning in an intentional, collaborative, and ongoing way, as opposed to pre-packaged delivery.⁸² In qualitative feedback gathered during teacher listening sessions, some teachers specifically cited other teachers as a primary resource for improving their craft and expressed a desire for professional development opportunities that are not “one size fits all” and would allow for greater observation and collaboration with other teachers.⁸³

“There should be opportunities to collaborate, raise issues, and identify solutions.”

– High School Teacher

Action 15. Celebrate, retain and promote high-performing staff.

To achieve our ambitious goals for student learning, the School District must be an organization where members of a highly skilled professional workforce want to build a career. To retain a high-performing staff, we will empower school leaders and their leadership teams with the authority to make important decisions, including around staffing and budgeting; develop school leaders to be strong managers with strategies for celebrating, rewarding, and retaining high-performing staff; and support new and beginning teachers, and promote their longevity within the District, through a high-quality teacher on-boarding and induction program. Additionally, we will expand the targeted growth and development program we launched this year for our strongest teachers. The purpose of the program is to make investments in excellent teachers with the goal of further developing and retaining our best teachers.

A survey of teachers in five Philadelphia schools found that effective teachers frequently cited dissatisfaction with school leadership, as well as issues of school culture and environment, as the reasons they planned to leave their current schools.⁸⁴ Across the schools, fewer than 60% of teachers identified by their principals as effective experienced acknowledgements, such as being publicly recognized for their accomplishments, being informed that they are high-performing, or being put in charge of something important – all of which are proven, cost-neutral ways of increasing retention and satisfaction.⁸⁵

III. Funding the plan

While we have made some progress on securing the resources we need to provide adequate schooling to all children in Philadelphia, we must continue to identify and secure additional sources of funding in order to accomplish the success that is possible. For the good of the city and the public school sector, the annual rite of clamoring for more funding must end and the focus must shift to the core work of improving schools with the necessary resources to do so.

Action 16. Obtain necessary and deserved additional public revenue.

Our transformational Five-Year Financial Plan, which envisions more than basic school conditions for Philadelphia’s children, requires meaningful investments from both the City of Philadelphia and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. To give every Philadelphia public school student access to a quality

education, we are seeking an investment of an additional \$309 million in FY16 and \$913 million by FY19 in city and state funds. This new investment will primarily be targeted to school-level programs and interventions that are informed by both great school leadership and evidence-based practices. Such levels of investment would allow the District to realize its Anchor Goals of ensuring all students graduate college- and career-ready; all 8-year-olds read on grade level; and all schools have great principals and teachers.

Using the methodology of the legislatively commissioned “Costing Out” study, researchers determined the School District has an adequacy gap of \$5,478 per pupil, more than double the overall adequacy gap in high-poverty Pennsylvania districts; even so, the District “more efficiently utilized its resources than [did] the average peer district in terms of student poverty and achievement.”⁸⁶ These findings confirm that the School District is significantly underfunded, and would make very effective use of additional funds to raise student academic performance.

“I believe it gets more and more difficult for the staff at [my child’s school] to provide the education that the children deserve without funds. They are doing the best that they can but the constant threat of layoffs and further budget cuts continues to affect the staff.”

- School District Parent

Action 17. Ensure fairness of charter per pupil payments, and accuracy of enrollment distribution.

The current charter school funding formula, which requires passing on funding to charter schools for services that they are not responsible for providing, must be modified. First, the per pupil calculation includes expenditures from the District’s total operating budget – including costs like health services for non-public school students, charter school payments, and local grant funding that charter schools can and do receive on their own – not just the portion of the budget that reflects costs of the types of students that charter schools serve. Second, the formula requires funding all charter school special education students at the same rate, regardless of degree of disability. As charter schools in Philadelphia typically serve students with less severe disabilities than students served in District schools, a universal payment based on District special education spending overpays charter schools for the population served. Furthermore, we must ensure that we are only making per pupil payments for students actually enrolled in charter schools.

According to an analysis by the Pennsylvania Association of School Business Officials (PASBO), last year charter schools across the state received over \$350 million for special education students, but spent just \$156 million to serve those students.⁸⁷

Data from SY13-14 highlights the differences in the special education student populations served in District schools compared to charter schools: 8.3% of students required autistic support in District schools, compared to 3.1% in charter schools; 6.5% of students required life skills support in District schools, compared to 2.1% in charter schools; and 1.7% of students required support for multiple disabilities in District schools compared to 0.5% in charter schools.⁸⁸

Action 18. Ensure productivity and efficiency in use of all funding.

- a. **Develop a comprehensive, outcomes-focused budgeting strategy, including five year planning.** To reach our goals, we need to take a multi-year, outcomes-focused approach to budgeting that takes into account both the short- and long-term implications of our decisions. To that end, the SRC recently adopted a new five-year financial plan. The five-year plan is not the District’s annual budget; instead, it is an important budgetary forecast tool that provides a forward-looking view of the District’s revenues and expenditures. The five-year plan enhances our ability to invest strategically in practices that have been proven to improve student

achievement while also providing greater transparency and ensuring that the District remains a responsible financial steward of public resources.⁸⁹

Disciplined resource allocation is fundamental to achieving sustainable results in public education. Budgeting is an essential vehicle for prioritizing and planning, gathering stakeholder input, communicating with funders, and ensuring organizational alignment and accountability to our most important work – educating students.⁹⁰

- b. **Continuously analyze the impact of spending, and deploy resources to achieve priorities, including consideration of the activities, schools, and programs that need them the most.** We must continuously review our investments and the impact they have on student achievement. We must allocate resources towards strategies that have proven effective in achieving our desired student and system-level outcomes. We prioritize directing resources to the school-level and providing school leaders with significant discretion in how to structure their school budgets. If and when we determine that programs are ineffective, we will stop investing in them.

The District invests over \$1.75 billion in the education of approximately 137,000 students in preK-12 District-operated programs and schools. Since 2007, the District has steadily shifted a higher percentage of resources to schools, reducing the percentage of the operating budget that is directed by the central office from 45% to 34%. Additionally, the District spends less than 3% of its operating budget on central office administration – far lower than any other large school district in the U.S.⁹¹

- c. **Align capital and grants programs in support of our Anchor Goals.** To achieve our goals for student learning, especially in a period of limited resources, we must ensure that all spending from all sources is aligned with and accelerates our progress toward our Anchor Goals. This fiscal year, we fully integrated the capital and grant budgets, alongside our operating budget, within the five-year planning process. The alignment of capital investments with the Action Plan is described above in Action 9.d. In both our own grant-seeking activities and in reviewing external requests for partnership on grant applications, we are requiring alignment with our Anchor Goal focused needs.

The District is using federal and state funds – which are appropriated based on, and must be utilized consistent with, various regulations – in support of its Anchor Goals. This year, for example, we are investing significant Title I funding in proven interventions to support our early literacy Anchor Goal, including providing full-time literacy specialists to support instruction at 40 of our lowest-performing elementary schools.

- d. **Continuously identify savings opportunities and capture identified cost savings.** To help meet ongoing fiscal challenges, and to maximize the resources supporting teaching and learning, we have identified and are implementing a series of cost savings measures. These measures span all sectors of our budget from capital projects to health benefits to charter schools to procurement.

Over the course of the next five years, the District is expected to save tens of millions of dollars through a series of cost savings initiatives. Ongoing savings initiatives related to auditing cyber charter school enrollment and recouping payments on architecture and engineering contracts generated several millions of dollars in savings last year.

- e. **Institute financial controls.** Incorporating fiscal discipline and control helps us manage and better understand our spending.⁹² We will continue to institute financial controls at all levels of the organization, including incorporating good financial stewardship as part of principal and program manager training, supports, and evaluations. Earlier this year, we entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the City of Philadelphia’s Office of the Inspector General (OIG), for OIG to manage and evaluate the work of our own Inspector General’s Office to build our capacity and efficiency in monitoring the work of School District and charter schools.

The City of Philadelphia’s Office of the Inspector General has generated tens of millions of dollars of savings for the City through its investigations of waste, fraud, and abuse.⁹³

Action 19. Ensure equitable allocation, including student weighted funding.

In implementing our System of Great Schools approach, we plan to pilot a student-weighted funding formula whereby resources would be allocated to schools based upon the number and needs of the students they serve.

When funds follow students, schools have an incentive to improve performance and increase enrollment, which supports district-wide growth and improvement.⁹⁴ In 2008, Baltimore City Public Schools implemented a “fair student funding” budgeting approach whereby each student was assigned a baseline level of funding and additional funding was provided based on the needs of individual students using factors such as poverty, academic performance, and special education status. As a result of this and related reforms, equity across schools improved significantly: in the year prior to the reforms, 52% of schools fell within 10% of the median dollar per adjusted pupil; one year later, over 80% of schools hit that mark.⁹⁵

Action 20. Build a strong development function.

To improve children’s academic, social, and emotional development and to better support families, we will cultivate and sustain partnerships at the system and school levels. Our existing partnerships span the philanthropic, business, non-profit, higher education, and community organization fields, and include direct financial support, volunteerism, and in-kind donations. Under the leadership of the new head of the Fund for the School District of Philadelphia – our dedicated fundraising entity – and in conjunction with our Office of Strategic Partnerships and the Grants Development Office, we will prioritize collaboratively determining where and how we can work with our partners to support our goals in service of students.

In SY13-14, the District received close to \$10 million in donations and private grants. Such funding enables the expansion of high-quality schools, and sustained and expanded important student-focused programming.⁹⁶

“Overall the whole staff, in partnership with our Home and School, creates a great village for all of our students in spite of our school district’s current funding crisis.”

- School District Parent

Action 21. Achieve additional, needed structural budget fixes.

To move beyond perpetual crisis, achieve equity for all children, and provide real opportunity for students, we must attain some combination of significant structural budget fixes. In addition to the above-noted increases in public revenue and changes in the charter school per pupil formula, these solutions could include a combination of a State-wide student weighted funding formula; pension relief; debt relief; and significant, additional labor savings.

IV. Responsive service and support

One of the tremendous benefits of operating schools at scale (in our case, over 200 schools) is the ability to provide lean, low-cost central services to schools. The District continues to reorient those services to be more responsive, less expensive, and best-in-class.

Action 22. Be accessible and responsive to students, parents, families, colleagues, and the public.

- a. **Become world class at providing customer service.** It is essential that we provide students, parents and families, colleagues, and the public with a welcoming environment and a high level of customer service at our schools and at the central office. At all levels of the organization, we will focus on better serving and responding to our customers (i.e., principals, teachers, and other school-based staff, parents and families, and the public for the central office; and students, and parents and families for schools). Through a partnership between the Office of Technology Services and the Office of Family and Community Engagement, we will improve the call ticketing system and publicize and further develop ask.philasd.org, the one-stop-shop for District information, to better respond to parents and stakeholders.

Reducing the effort customers have to expend to obtain needed information or resolve a problem builds customer loyalty; acting deliberately on this insight helps improve customer service, reduce customer service costs, and decrease customer churn.⁹⁷

In a recent survey conducted by the Office of Research and Evaluation about the quality of school and District communication, parents reported positive feelings about their schools' ability to effectively communicate student achievements, behavior, academic standards, and ways to support academic achievement. However, when asked about District, rather school-level, communication, parents and guardians report more negative feelings regarding responses to questions or concerns.⁹⁸

"I have not tried to contact the District often. One time, the person I spoke with was phenomenal. Other times, calling on behalf of the PTA, we've gotten nowhere; or when we've tried to bring in outside experts to assist in a club they've been discouraged with the runaround when dealing with the District, withdrawn their support, and our students suffer."

– School District Parent

- b. **Actively solicit and respond to feedback on the effectiveness of our schools and our key departments through surveys, focus groups, and town halls.** We will utilize and seek to increase participation in the Office of Research and Evaluation's annual student survey and parent and guardian survey; support the Operations Division's surveys and focus groups; invite students, parents, and community stakeholders to participate in focus groups to solicit ideas for improving the educational experiences of students; expand best practices for incorporating student voice; and schedule town hall meetings in all of the District's learning networks.

Schools are aided when educators provide opportunities for families to respond to information. Parents have important ideas, reactions, questions, and other contributions that increase the likelihood that their children will be understood, well served, and successful in school.⁹⁹

“The students at [my] high school have the power to actually tell the principal “No!” I would say that we are incorporated as very powerful people. Our school is modeled after the government of the United States of America. That means everyone has a voice and everyone’s voice is needed in order for an event or rule to be passed.”

– High School Student

Action 23. Become a high-functioning and dynamic central organization.

- a. **Improve the accuracy, accessibility, and use of whole-system and central-office data to better facilitate data-driven decision-making.** To pursue data-driven goals, it is critical that we ensure the accuracy of our data and the appropriateness of its application across the system – in classrooms, schools, and the central administration. Continuing this work, we will focus on replacing the District’s antiquated Student Information System with a new flexible solution that will facilitate the administrative, yet critical, role of collecting student data in areas including attendance, class rosters, grades, report cards, and state reporting. The flexibility in a new web-based Student Information System will provide direct integration with other instructionally-focused tools such as a Learning Management System that provides access to full courses, assignments, and activities for students and the District’s Instructional Management System that provides access to teacher tools such as instructional activities, multimedia resources, curriculum guides, and targeted data to support teachers in planning effective instruction.

Accurate and accessible data is of utmost importance for school districts that use data to inform their policies and for educators who use this information to inform their practice.¹⁰⁰

- b. **Continue to incorporate research and evidence to improve and evolve our teaching and learning activities, evaluate the impact of our efforts, and improve fidelity of implementation.** We will identify and implement evidence-based practices to ensure that our efforts have a high likelihood of success, while encouraging stakeholders to expect, seek, and utilize rigorous evidence in decision-making by supporting a research-to-practice culture. Under the leadership of the Office of Research and Evaluation, we will continue to incorporate evaluation research into new and existing programs to foster a continuous feedback loop and modify, expand, or cease programming as appropriate. Finally, we will continue to align external research with our strategic priorities, formulating new research partnerships as appropriate, to maximize the evidence available to us as we improve our practices and programs – for example, as we did with the “Shared Solutions for School Improvement: Developing a System of Excellent Schools” conference we co-hosted with a university partner last fall.

Knowing what programs are effective and ineffective provides concrete guidance for school superintendents, principals, and teachers who need information to make sound decisions that will improve instruction and raise student achievement.¹⁰¹

- c. **Implement effective, aligned business processes.** To achieve our Anchor Goals, we must realign businesses practices, and the technology that supports them, to reflect a more efficient working environment. We have re-engineered the position control system and continue to modernize the automated routing system and facility work order system. We are also providing training on core systems to ensure that staff understand and can utilize systems relevant to their work. Additionally, the Office of Procurement Services will increase the diversity and competitiveness of vendors; create a more user-friendly experience for District employees by developing an online marketplace; and streamline buying processes by implementing a bid management system.

Efficiency and alignment of organizational structures are critical to the effective implementation of reform efforts.¹⁰²

- d. **Transform the organization at all levels and build a culture of excellence by instituting strategic management practices.** Strategic management offers us a rigorous approach for communicating our organizational goals, prioritizing and pursuing the highest-impact strategies, tracking progress against targets, evaluating and adjusting strategies based on data, holding the organization and team members accountable for progress toward collective goals, and identifying and celebrating individual and team contributions to overall efforts. We will continue to implement strategic management processes and tools to expand our capacity to more effectively, reliably, and efficiently achieve our Anchor Goals.

High performing organizations incorporate a focus on results into their cultures, ensuring all people understand how to contribute to organizational success. An analysis of twenty school systems from around the world demonstrated that using management practices that identify appropriate interventions within the context of each stage of system improvement and that have a disciplined focus on performance results can produce significant, sustained, and widespread gains in student outcomes.¹⁰³

- e. **Develop and implement a user-friendly way to share and spread effective ideas (i.e., a “knowledge management strategy”) that drives the adoption and integration of evidence-based practices at the classroom, school, and system level.** We will engage thought leaders, practitioners, and research partners internally and externally to support the creation and collection of high quality knowledge assets (i.e., templates, processes, plans) that align to District goals. We will build and maintain a web-based learning repository that hosts high-quality, multimedia-rich knowledge assets and sustains interest and engagement among users while leveraging strategic communication channels (emails, social media feeds, web portals) to maximize the reach of knowledge assets and knowledge-sharing opportunities. Additionally, we will build on existing efforts to expand access to responsive, personalized supports and professional development opportunities for educators.

An effective knowledge management function is foundational to driving continuous improvement efforts and building a learning organization. By capturing and sharing high-quality curriculum, artifacts, case studies, and research a district can develop knowledge-sharing teacher networks and enable information and knowledge to expand, be shared, and create value.¹⁰⁴

- f. **Improve communication throughout the organization and to the public.** We will build and maintain momentum for the excellent work performed across the District through frequent, transparent, and consistent communication of expectations and progress across all levels of the organization. We will continue to increase opportunities for data-focused, collaborative problem solving. Recognizing that much of the great work underway at the District is not widely known, we will redouble our efforts to call attention to the excellent work our colleagues and students are pursuing every day.

Communication is a core competency that, when properly executed, can help ensure successful project implementation by connecting the team to a common set of strategies, goals, and actions.¹⁰⁵ Clear communication can help foster organizational coherence, which ultimately improves the effectiveness and sustainability of reform efforts.¹⁰⁶

Action 24. Actively promote innovation at all levels of the organization.

- a. **Solicit input from multiple stakeholders regarding areas to be improved through innovation.** We will solicit feedback from teachers, school leaders, families, and other stakeholders to better understand current challenges and opportunities for innovative solutions. We will identify and seek to address any policy or other structural barriers to implementing innovative solutions.

In order to build a culture that champions and supports innovation, it is critical that each organization develops a shared definition of what innovation means within the context of its work.¹⁰⁷

“With the work we have done at [our school], being innovative has meant always pushing ourselves to consider how the best of our ideas of an inquiry-driven education can lead to more powerful, authentic, and empowering learning for the students we serve.”

- Principal of innovative High School

- b. **Develop and utilize a common set of tools, strategies, and processes to facilitate innovative approaches to solve organizational challenges.** We will create clear pathways for innovators to design and implement effective solutions. We will use data to test and make decisions about the efficacy of current approaches and the potential impact of implementing innovative solutions.

For an organization to reflect the requirements of learning, the environment of incentives must include encouragement and support, access to data and analysis, time to focus on the requisites of a new task, and time to observe others in action.¹⁰⁸

- c. **Encourage, learn from, and thoughtfully support innovators.** We will encourage and support innovators as they explore emerging opportunities and address entrenched challenges through professional learning opportunities, ongoing policy reviews, and innovation-themed forums. We will ensure that innovation is celebrated, shared, and studied.

Organizations need structures – formal and/or informal – that are deliberately designed to value and support ongoing innovation, and also clear, consistent processes for how innovating will be promoted, supported, and rewarded. With structures and processes in place, team members can begin to develop “habits of mind” – the cadence and routines of regularized innovation.¹⁰⁹

Action 25. Engage teachers, principals, professional networks, and labor unions to identify, explore, develop, and scale great ideas.

- a. **Invite teachers and teacher networks to share ideas and insights that improve student outcomes.** Our teachers are in an optimal position to identify and pursue opportunities to improve the academic success of students. We will continue to hold teacher listening sessions, and will explore additional venues for sharing and shaping great ideas. The Office of School Improvement and Innovation will also call on teachers to submit innovative ideas that will be matched to schools as part of the School Redesign Initiative’s upcoming “Call for Quality.”

Feedback is the most effective way of maintaining a culture of continuous learning. Systems of constant feedback generate opportunities to assess the performance of the organization, evaluate and develop the skills of administrators, school leaders, and teachers, and accelerate the pace of improvement.¹¹⁰

“There should be less of a top-down approach and more collaboration between administration or policy-makers and teachers. We’re all on the same team and working for the same outcome.”

– High School Teacher

- b. **Work collaboratively with both our staff and the organizations that represent them to develop and scale practices that work.** The majority of the District’s labor force is represented by one of five union organizations. To further develop and strengthen our workforce, it is important that we work collaboratively with both our staff and the organizations that represent them to develop and scale practices that work.

In 2012, Meriden Public Schools, Meriden Federation of Teachers, and the National Center for Time & Learning joined in an effort to fund and implement an extended-day program. The union partnership and collaborative relationship was critical to the program, which added an additional 40 days of instructional time to the school year and increased attendance by 10% at extended-day sites.¹¹¹

Conclusion: where we go from here

The plan described above is part of a process. Much of what is described here has already started or is ongoing. Some Actions will be new, done differently, or done better. And all Actions are subject to review and revision. As with Action Plan 1.0 and 2.0, this document will evolve with time. That said, there is a clear path forward.

Our specific next steps are:

Launch or continue implementation. We will define timing, metrics, and targets, identify owners, and develop implementation plans for all Actions included in the Plan while continuing our specific, initial focus on activities that will advance the District's early literacy Anchor Goal. Next steps include the launch of similar routines around our other Anchor Goals.

Set up systems and routines to drive progress and track success. We will review progress toward our targets weekly. Collectively, we will engage in solution-oriented, data-driven problem-solving sessions in support of the realization of our commitments and to resolve implementation challenges.

Drive the FY16 budgeting process. This Action Plan will serve as a major input into the District budgeting process. All central office departments and schools will be asked to align their work and budgets to the priorities set forth in the Action Plan.

Refine through stakeholder input. We will continue to incorporate input from staff and stakeholders to refine and further evolve the Plan.

Appendices

Appendix A – School District of Philadelphia Performance Scorecard

How We Will Track Our Progress and How We Will Hold Ourselves Accountable

Anchor Goal 1: 100% of students with graduate college and career-ready

- PSSA Mathematics - % Proficient or Advanced
- PSSA Mathematics - AGI
- PSSA Reading (Grades 4-8) - % Proficient or Advanced
- PSSA Reading - AGI
- Keystone Algebra I - First-Time Pass Rate
- Keystone Literature - First-Time Pass Rate
- Keystone Biology - First-Time Pass Rate
- PSSA/Keystone Proficiency Rates by Subgroup
- Survey - Student Rating of Academic Quality
- % On-Track Students who Earn Req. Num. Credits for Promotion
- % Off-Track Students who Earn 5+ Credits
- Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rate
- First-Fall College Matriculation Rate
- FAFSA Completion Rate
- % of Students Attending 95% or More of Instructional Days
- % of Students with Zero Out-of-School Suspensions

Anchor Goal 2: 100% of 8 year-olds will read on grade level

- Reading Levels (Grades K-2) - % at Target Level
- PSSA Reading (Grade 3) - % Proficient or Advanced

Anchor Goal 3: 100% of schools will have great principals and teachers

- Percentage of Teachers Rated Distinguished in Formal Observation Year
- Percentage of Teachers Rated Distinguished in Instruction Domain in Formal Observation Year
- Student Survey Rating of Educator Effectiveness

Anchor Goal 4: SDP will have 100% of funding we need for great schools, and zero deficit

- General Fund Expenditures Efficiency (Final Amended budget as % of Actual)

Appendix B – Action Plan 2.0: How We Did

● = Significant Progress	◐ = Some Progress	○ = Little Progress
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Strategy 1: Improve Student Learning

A. Fully adopt and integrate the PA Core standards in all of our teaching and learning activities	●
B. Define college and career readiness based on student mastery of content, and align graduation standards	◐
C. Identify and implement a rigorous, flexible PreK-12 curriculum	●
D. Implement a literacy-rich early childhood continuum of services, including recuperative practices	◐
E. Develop and implement a coherent assessment system	◐
F. Promote effective instructional practices in every classroom	●
G. Accelerate progress towards personalized learning	○
H. Provide high quality Special Education services in the least restrictive learning environment	◐
I. Support rigorous and linguistically appropriate learning experiences for English Language Learners (ELL)	◐
J. Integrate a focus on “academic tenacity” throughout the curriculum	○
K. Improve student nutrition and meal experience	◐

Strategy 2: Develop a System of Excellent Schools

A. Make all District schools great by implementing high performing school practices	●
B. Provide students with an environment conducive to learning by implementing and maintaining safety and climate plans that incorporate evidence-based programs	●
C. Ensure all schools are porous – connected to community resources and partnerships to meet student needs	◐
D. Empower school leaders and their leadership teams with the authority to make important decisions	◐
E. Make poor performing schools better through the Renaissance turnaround program, including evidence-based revisions to the Promise Academy model	○
F. Promote compelling, successful programs including Career and Technical Education and project-based learning	●
G. Review and improve the provision of schooling across all our alternative settings	○
H. Strengthen neighborhood schools	◐
I. Create and launch new, evidence-based school models, and scale the ones that work	●
J. Be a great charter school authorizer to ensure all charters are good school options, and promote the sharing of successful practices across all schools	●
K. Develop and implement a school progress measure	●
L. Provide a clean and comfortable building environment in all schools	◐
M. Continuously update and refine the system-of-schools plan, including school expansions and closure assessments of chronically under-enrolled and under-performing schools	●

Strategy 3: Identify and Develop Exceptional, Committed People

A. Improve recruitment and hiring practices to attract the highest quality candidates	●
B. Strengthen the principal and teacher pipelines	◐
C. Celebrate, retain and promote high performing staff, particularly great teachers and principals	◐
D. Support the continuous development of all personnel – tailored to individuals – including an emphasis on school-based coaching for principals and teachers	◐

- E. Create meaningful opportunities for teacher collaboration and for principal collaboration
- F. Collaborate with the City and other partners to make Philadelphia a premier place for principals and teachers to work
- G. Set clear expectations for teachers, principals and support staff and implement regular performance evaluations
- H. Engage teachers, principals, professional networks, labor unions and other partners to identify, explore, develop, and scale great ideas related to talent

Strategy 4: Become a Parent- and Family-Centered Organization

- A. Actively reach out to parents to involve them in their children’s schools, including the launch of a School Advisory Council in every school
- B. Establish clear processes for parent and family input and ideas
- C. Provide parents with information about their students’ progress and how to support that progress
- D. Provide parents and families with excellent customer service
- E. Provide parents with ample information on schools, and increase the equity and transparency of the school selection, transfer, and placement processes

Strategy 5: Become an Innovative and Accountable Organization

- A. Cultivate and sustain partnerships at the system and school levels
- B. Transform the organization by instituting strategic management processes at all levels and building a culture of excellence
- C. Improve data accuracy, application, and accessibility
- D. Implement effective, aligned business processes
- E. Improve communication throughout the organization and to the public
- F. Actively promote innovation and cross-functional design thinking
- G. Implement core student- and teacher-facing systems for schools, including a Learning Management System and a Student Information System
- H. Improve the quality and lower the cost of transportation services

Strategy 6: Achieve and Sustain Financial Balance

- A. Seek additional revenues
- B. Continuously identify savings opportunities and capture identified cost savings
- C. Meet the immediate financial challenges of FY14 and FY15
- D. Continuously analyze the impact of spending and deploy resources to achieve priorities, including the activities, schools and programs that need them the most
- E. Develop a comprehensive, outcomes-based budgeting strategy, including five-year planning
- F. Institute financial controls
- G. Align the capital and grants programs in support of the anchor goals

Appendix C – Sources for creation of the Action Plan

Action Plan 3.0 expanded and improved upon Action Plans 2.0 and 1.0, which were developed inclusive of input from our students, employees, parents and families, and the broader community. All amendments in 3.0 were made in reference to input from our students, principals, assistant principals, teachers, school-based support staff, and central office staff. More specifically, in addition to a high reliance on the content of Action Plans 1.0 and 2.0, Action Plan 3.0 reflects input from the following sources:

- Teacher listening sessions convened at multiple schools across the District
- 2013-14 District-Wide Student Surveys
- 2013-14 District-Wide Parent and Guardian Survey
- Meetings with the Superintendent’s Student Advisory Council
- Interviews with and Plan-related feedback from more than 50 district leaders, Assistant Superintendents, and program managers
- Inputs and support from additional central office staff who offered their thoughts and feedback throughout the development of the Plan
- Analytics and discussion from monthly central office Executive Team meetings
- Presentations and input from invited speakers, parents, families, students, educators, community members, and advocates during the SRC’s monthly Strategy, Policy and Priorities (SPP) meetings
- Public testimony at monthly SRC monthly action meetings
- Shared Solutions Conference, co-hosted by the School District of Philadelphia and Penn’s Graduate School of Education, November 12, 2014
- Focus group with select principals relating to the District’s early literacy strategy




In addition, multiple strategic documents shaped the content of this Plan, including:

- Action Plans 1.0 and 2.0
- The Five Year Financial Plan, Fiscal Years 2015-2019
- Philadelphia’s Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, Briefing Paper, March 2014
- READ! by 4th Community Solutions Action Plan, July 2014, Prepared by Fairmount Ventures
- 2014-15 Early Care and Education Interview (ECEI) Briefing, Office of Early Childhood Education
- Improving Kindergarten Readiness and Early Grade Success: Recommendations to the School District of Philadelphia, prepared by Christie Balka, September 2014
- FY15-16 Departmental Action Plans, Office of Academic Supports
- RtII Model Plan, Office of Curriculum Instruction and Assessment, updated April 2014
- Special Education Plan Report, July 2014 through June 2017 School District of Philadelphia Operations Division: Two-Year Action Plan, 2014-15
- 2015-16 Professional Development Strategic Plan, Office of Effectiveness
- SY14-15 Strategic Plan, Office of Recruitment & Staffing
- Office of New School Models Five Year Strategic Plan, November 2014
- Charter School Office Authorizing Quality Initiative documents

- Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Next Gen System Design Proposal, January 2014
- Renaissance Schools Initiative Progress Report: 2010-2011 through 2012-2013, Office of Research and Evaluation
- College and Career Readiness Evaluation Plan, Office of Research and Evaluation
- Fall 2014 Professional Development Reports, Office of Research and Evaluation
- Response to Instruction and Intervention 2013-14 Implementation Report, Office of Research and Evaluation
- Teacher-led Professional Development through Integrated Inquiry, A Proposal for the School District of Philadelphia, Prepared by the Philadelphia Education Fund and Teacher Networks of Philadelphia
- 2015 School Feedback Results, Hipster Henry
- SY14-2015 Principal Handbook
- Student Code of Conduct

Appendix D – Cross-walk from Action Plan 2.0 to Action Plan 3.0

Legend

-  Action remains same as in Action Plan 2.0
-  Action is modified from Action Plan 2.0
-  New Action in Action Plan 3.0

I. An equitable system of schools

- Action 1. Maintain a system of great schools with the school models and programs we need to serve *all* students equitably.
- a. Reinvest in Networks of local, neighborhood schools, open to all students.
 - b. Dramatically improve our lowest-performing schools by creating and investing in a Turnaround Network, comprised of District-run, evidence-based turnaround model(s); proven external provider-run turnaround models; and Renaissance charter turnarounds.
 - c. Review and improve the provision of schooling for “opportunity youth” who are at risk or already detached from schooling by establishing an Opportunity Network, comprised of District-run and external-provider alternative education options.
 - d. Establish and nurture an Innovation Network of new, evidence-based school models, and continuously evaluate the schools to inform future plans for replication and transformation.
 - e. Over time, offer the option of 100% autonomy to certain District-run schools, including a per-student funding allocation and Charter-like flexibilities.
 - f. Annually collect and analyze data on school progress and release a School Progress Report for each school.
 - g. Promote compelling, successful programs including Career and Technical Education, AP and IB courses, and project-based learning.
 - h. Through the School Redesign Initiative, provide evidence-based opportunities for school communities and partners to transform themselves to meet the needs of the students they serve.
 - i. Create a service delivery model pilot program to explore offering best-in-class District services on a fee-for-service basis, including to non-District schools.
 - j. Invest the time and resources we need to reorient our organization to support the System of Great Schools.
 - k. Continuously update and refine the System of Great Schools plan, including expansion and replication of good schools, and transformation or closure of chronically under-enrolled and under-performing schools.
- Action 2. Be a great charter school authorizer to ensure all charters are good school options, and promote the sharing of successful practices across all schools.

II. District schools for student success

A. Teaching

- Action 3. Provide excellent teaching in all classrooms.
- a. Consistently promote excellent instruction through a clear vision for achievement and strong and productive feedback to teachers.
 - b. Create meaningful opportunities for principal and for teacher collaboration focused on teaching.
 - c. Supply assessment results in a timely manner through updated student- and teacher-facing data systems so as to inform instructional planning.
 - d. Enhance implementation of Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS, also known as RtII).
- Action 4. Implement a flexible curriculum aligned to the PA Core Standards.
- a. Align curricula, assessments, and materials to the PA Core Standards, providing an appropriately paced and rigorous framework that allows for flexibility in instructional delivery.
 - b. Align graduation standards based on student mastery of content, drawing on the PA Core Standards' description of a college- and career-ready student.
- Action 5. Promote a literacy-rich continuum from preK through Grade 3, including recuperative practices.
- a. Ensure alignment of curricular standards from preK through Grade 3.
 - b. Integrate the Comprehensive Literacy Framework in all preK through Grade 3 classrooms.
 - c. Working with our preK partners, expand availability and access to high quality preK programs to increase Kindergarten readiness.
- Action 6. Provide specialized learning experiences for students who need them.
- a. Provide high quality services to special education students in the least restrictive environment, supported by collaboration between general education and special education teachers.
 - b. Support rigorous and linguistically appropriate learning experiences for English Language Learners (ELLs).
- Action 7. Recognize, respond to, and support the social-emotional and behavioral health needs of our students.
- a. Equip staff to recognize and appropriately address students' social-emotional and behavioral needs through trauma-informed practices.
 - b. Integrate a focus on "academic tenacity" throughout students' educational experience.
 - c. Implement and maintain age-appropriate, school-wide climate plans that incorporate evidence-based programs and practices.
 - d. Equip staff and students to implement the Bullying and Harassment Policies with fidelity.

- Action 8. Implement a coherent assessment system aligned to the PA Core Standards.
- a. Adopt and implement a coherent assessment system that helps educators monitor student progress, informs instructional practices, and assists in the identification of appropriate interventions.
 - b. Maintain data accuracy by ensuring that all instructional staff are trained to administer assessments to produce reliable and valid results.

B. School environment

- Action 9. Provide well-resourced, clean, comfortable, healthy, and safe school environments conducive to teaching and learning.
- a. Provide teachers with the materials and supplies required to effectively teach students.
 - b. Provide a clean and comfortable building environment in all schools.
 - c. Prevent and remediate environmental health hazards, including asthma triggers.
 - d. Focus capital investments in support of teaching and learning.
 - e. Ensure that all schools have thorough, clear safety plans protecting the security of students and staff.
- Action 10. Improve the provisions of services so students arrive in classrooms ready to learn.
- a. Improve student nutrition and meal experience.
 - b. Improve the quality of transportation services.
- Action 11. Create meaningful partnerships with parents and families.
- a. Support multiple opportunities and models for parent and family engagement.
 - b. Provide parents with the information and tools to support their children's academic progress.
 - c. Provide parents of preK through Grade 3 students with resources and activities to promote the development of language and literacy skills outside the classroom.
 - d. Provide parents with the information they need to make informed choices about their children's academic experience.
- Action 12. Connect schools with community resources and partnerships to meet student needs.
- a. Cultivate, encourage, and expand partnerships that prove most effective in addressing students' needs.
 - b. Improve information sharing with partners to direct resources and align activities toward meeting students' needs.
 - c. Actively participate in and contribute to the Citywide READ! by 4th Campaign.
 - d. Mobilize and direct relevant community partners to most effectively advance students' readiness for and access to college and career.

C. People

- Action 13. Identify and select exceptional principals, teachers, and other staff.
- a. Improve recruitment practices to attract the highest quality candidates.
 - b. Strengthen the principal and teacher pipelines both by identifying high-potential pools of external talent, and by cultivating and developing internal high performers for advancement.
 - c. Improve selection and hiring practices to ensure the right individuals are staffed in our schools.
 - d. Integrate within the recruitment pipeline for early elementary school teachers a preference for candidates with demonstrated experience or certification in teaching preK through Grade 3 students.
- Action 14. Support the continuous development of all personnel with high-quality training, evaluation, and job-embedded coaching.
- a. Set clear expectations for teachers, principals, and support staff through faithful implementation of the Pennsylvania Educator Effectiveness System.
 - b. Provide high-leverage professional development that supports teacher and principal growth and promotes effective instructional practices in every classroom.
 - c. Promote and support professional educator networks.
- Action 15. Celebrate, retain and promote high-performing staff.

III. Funding the plan

- Action 16. Obtain necessary and deserved additional public revenue.
- Action 17. Ensure fairness of charter per pupil payments, and accuracy of enrollment distribution.
- Action 18. Ensure productivity and efficiency in use of all funding.
- a. Develop a comprehensive, outcomes-focused budgeting strategy, including five year planning.
 - b. Continuously analyze the impact of spending, and deploy resources to achieve priorities, including consideration of the activities, schools, and programs that need them the most.
 - c. Align capital and grants programs in support of our Anchor Goals.
 - d. Continuously identify savings opportunities and capture identified cost savings.
 - e. Institute financial controls.
- Action 19. Ensure equitable allocation, including student weighted funding.
- Action 20. Build a strong development function.
- Action 21. Achieve additional, needed structural budget fixes.

IV. Responsive service and support

- Action 22. Be accessible and responsive to students, parents, families, colleagues, and the public.
- a. Become world class at providing customer service.
 - b. Actively solicit and respond to feedback on the effectiveness of our schools and our key departments through surveys, focus groups, and town halls.
- Action 23. Become a high-functioning and dynamic central organization.
- a. Improve the accuracy, accessibility, and use of whole-system and central-office data to better facilitate data-driven decision-making.
 - b. Continue to incorporate research and evidence to improve and evolve our teaching and learning activities, evaluate the impact of our efforts, and improve fidelity of implementation.
 - c. Implement effective, aligned business processes.
 - d. Transform the organization at all levels and build a culture of excellence by instituting strategic management processes.
 - e. Develop and implement a user-friendly way to share and spread effective ideas (i.e., a “knowledge management strategy”) that drives the adoption and integration of evidence-based practices at the classroom, school, and system level.
 - f. Improve communication throughout the organization and to the public.
- Action 24. Actively promote innovation at all levels of the organization.
- a. Solicit input from multiple stakeholders regarding areas to be improved through innovation.
 - b. Develop and utilize a common set of tools, strategies, and processes to facilitate innovative approaches to solve organizational challenges.
 - c. Encourage, learn from, and thoughtfully support innovators.
- Action 25. Engage teachers, principals, professional networks, and labor unions to identify, explore, develop, and scale great ideas.
- a. Invite teachers and teacher networks to share ideas and insights that improve student outcomes.
 - b. Work collaboratively with both our staff and the organizations that represent them to develop and scale practices that work.

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