



Transition Team Report

October 2022



THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF
PHILADELPHIA

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A Letter From the Transition Team Co-Chairs

We are pleased to present the Transition Team’s final report to the Board of Education and Dr. Tony B. Watlington Sr., Superintendent of the School District of Philadelphia. Dr. Watlington charged the Transition Team with assessing the current state of the District to provide short and long-term actions the District can take to make progress on the Board of Education’s Goals and Guardrails and District operational improvement.

As such, our recommendations focused on five areas of importance to the District:

- Student Achievement
- Operations
- Anti-Racist District Culture
- Community Engagement and Communications
- Enriching and Well-Rounded School Experiences

To formulate these recommendations, Dr. Watlington intentionally convened more than 100 members of the Philadelphia community – parents, teachers, principals, district staff, students, and union, educational, city, business, non-profit, and grassroots leaders. These members brought their local knowledge, experiences, and expertise to bear on the process. They worked together to review quantitative and qualitative information, educational research, and best practices to develop a comprehensive overview of the School District and recommendations that will shape the District’s future priorities.

The recommendations contained in this report reflect an understanding that because of the importance of education to the city, improvement is imperative. It will require a holistic approach and collaboration among all members of the community. Above all, the recommendations demonstrate a commitment to delivering a quality education that promotes high expectations for staff and students.

It is our sincere hope that the advice of many knowledgeable citizens and stakeholders will lead to a strategic plan that emphasizes innovative approaches that foster inspiration and stimulate students to enjoy how they learn as well as what they learn. The ultimate goal of this endeavor is for all students to realize their fullest potential and find success in life.

On behalf of the Transition Team, we thank you for the opportunity to serve the children of the city we all love.



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Executive Summary

A study by the American Association of School Administrators noted that newly-hired superintendents, and their districts, benefit from an efficient transition. Immediately upon his entry into the School District of Philadelphia as the new superintendent, Dr. Tony B. Watlington, Sr., commissioned a structured process for his transition. The process consists of three phases with specific outcomes:

Phase 1 - The First 100-Day Priorities

Designed to gather input from stakeholders in order to learn the needs and concerns of the community and District - June - October 2022

Phase 2 - The Transition Team

Designed to formulate a comprehensive overview of the District and make recommendations for strategic actions - July - October 2022

Phase 3 - The Strategic Plan

Designed to develop future paths and strategies to reach the Board's vision for all students to thrive, succeed, and lead in a global society - November 2022 - June 2023

The present report documents and details the process and outcomes of Phase 2: The Transition Team. It describes the activities and deliberations of each of the five sub-committees: Student Achievement; Operations; Anti-Racist District Culture; Community Engagement and Communications; and Enriching and Well-Rounded School Experiences. Each group received a specific charge that guided its work. The Transition Team process involved more than 100 internal, community, and external stakeholders who engaged in an in-depth examination of the District.

Through investigation and discussion, document reviews, inquiries, analyses, and focus groups, the team members ascertained strengths and challenges related to each subcommittee area, and generated 91 short-term and long-term recommendations and suggestions.



The sub-committees noted a number of strengths in the District. The School District of Philadelphia has been able to move from a deficit budgeting position to a focus on making investments in students, staff, and facilities. Also, a major accomplishment for the District was the dissolution of the School Reform Commission in 2018 and the return to local control governed by a Board of Education. All sub-committees noted the hard work and dedication of District staff. It is through their efforts, and the efforts of external partners, that major challenges in the past have been met and overcome.

The sub-committees also noted issues that remain and need focus and resolution, such as student academic achievement, facilities safety and repairs, communications, and operations. As the sub-committees developed their recommendations, three major themes emerged as critical imperatives to achieve the Board of Education's Goals and Guardrails and operational excellence:

Communication/Customer Service

Two-way communication and engagement with staff, students, parents/families, and the community is imperative to rebuild trust.

Coordination/Collaboration

Greater collaboration and inter-departmental systems are needed to conduct the District's operations and address issues more efficiently.

Accountability/Evaluation

Shared accountability for student success must be established and supported with more strategic data collection and monitoring to track and report progress toward specific District goals.

The Transition Team's work will help Dr. Watlington formulate his Strategic Plan and specify actionable and measurable goals for the future. By implementing specific recommendations, Dr. Watlington will be able to bring together the collective strength and intellect of the School District of Philadelphia under his collaborative leadership to accelerate progress.



Introduction

In 2022, a major leadership transition took place as Dr. William Hite retired from the School District of Philadelphia after a decade-long tenure, and a new superintendent, Dr. Tony B. Watlington Sr., assumed leadership of the District. A change in district leadership provides the unique opportunity for renewal, revival, and innovation, but also offers both challenges and opportunities. There are the challenges of addressing unresolved issues and problems and the opportunities to build upon existing strengths and successes to improve the District.



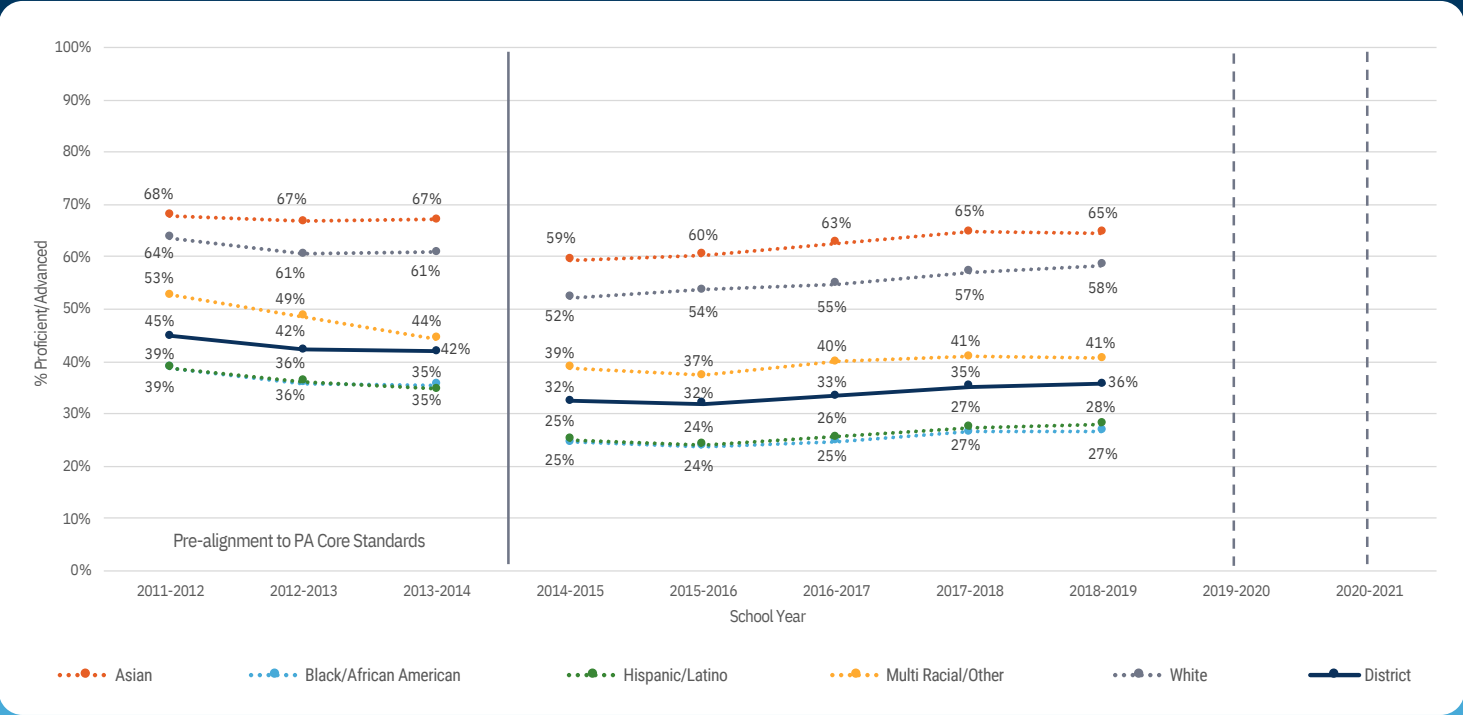
The District

In 2018, after more than seventeen years of management by the State's School Reform Commission, the District was returned to local control. The Board members are now appointed locally by the mayor.

While there has been progress during this time of stability, Dr. Watlington faces major issues in different areas of the District. He must address aging school facilities which are in need of repair, a national teacher and staffing shortage, and inadequate funding levels. Additionally, he must confront diminishing District enrollment over the last ten years. The District serves a highly diverse student population of 114,902 students - 52% Black; 22% Latino/Hispanic; 13% White; 7% Asian; and 5% Multi-Racial/Other. The traditional schools' enrollment, as well as the 79,902 charter schools' enrollment, together, make the district the eighth largest in the country.

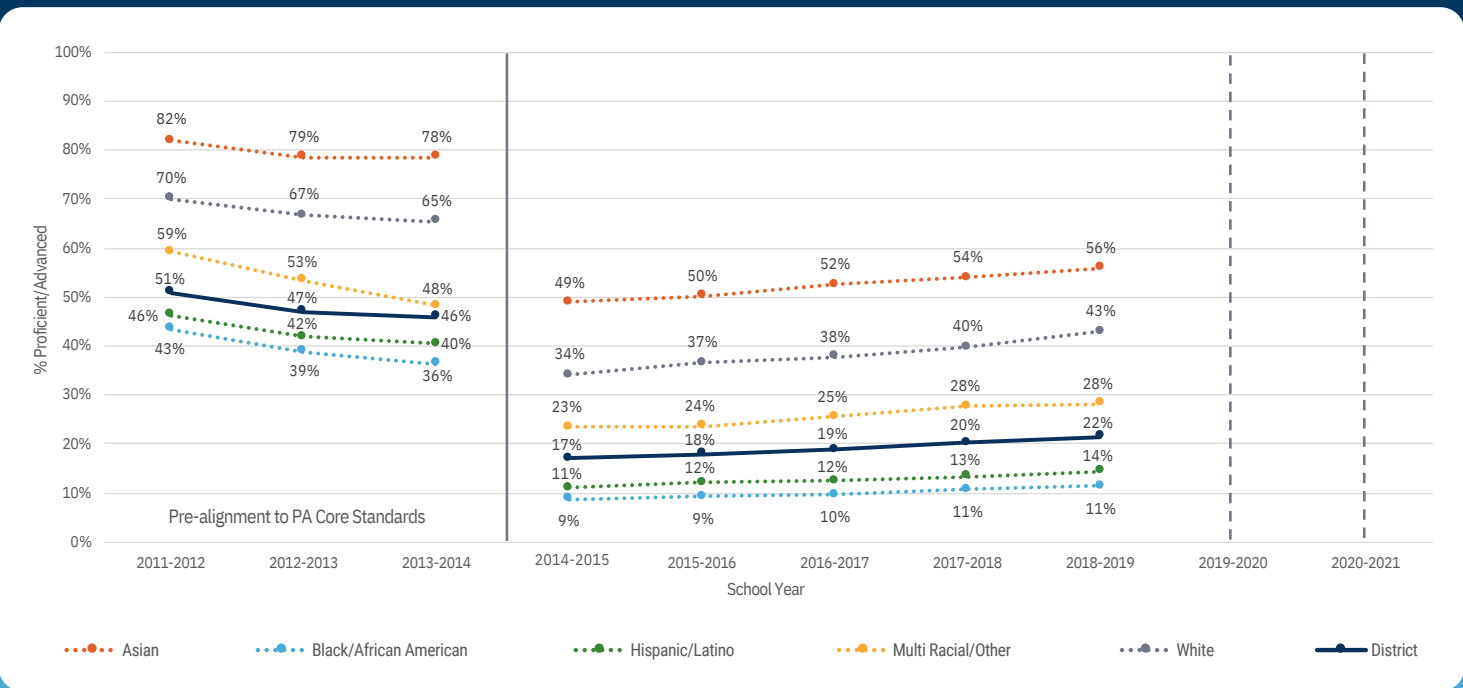
Lastly, despite periods of uneven student performance in the last decade, there has been consistently low student academic achievement. Since 2014, there have been slight increases in Grade 3-8 Math and English language arts (ELA) proficiency, while there has been a marginal decline in Grade 3 ELA proficiency (Figures 1-3). The four-year graduation rate has increased to 79.6% over the last decade (Figure 4).

Figure 1 - PSSA ELA: Percent Proficient and Advanced, Overall and by Race/Ethnicity (Grades 3-8)



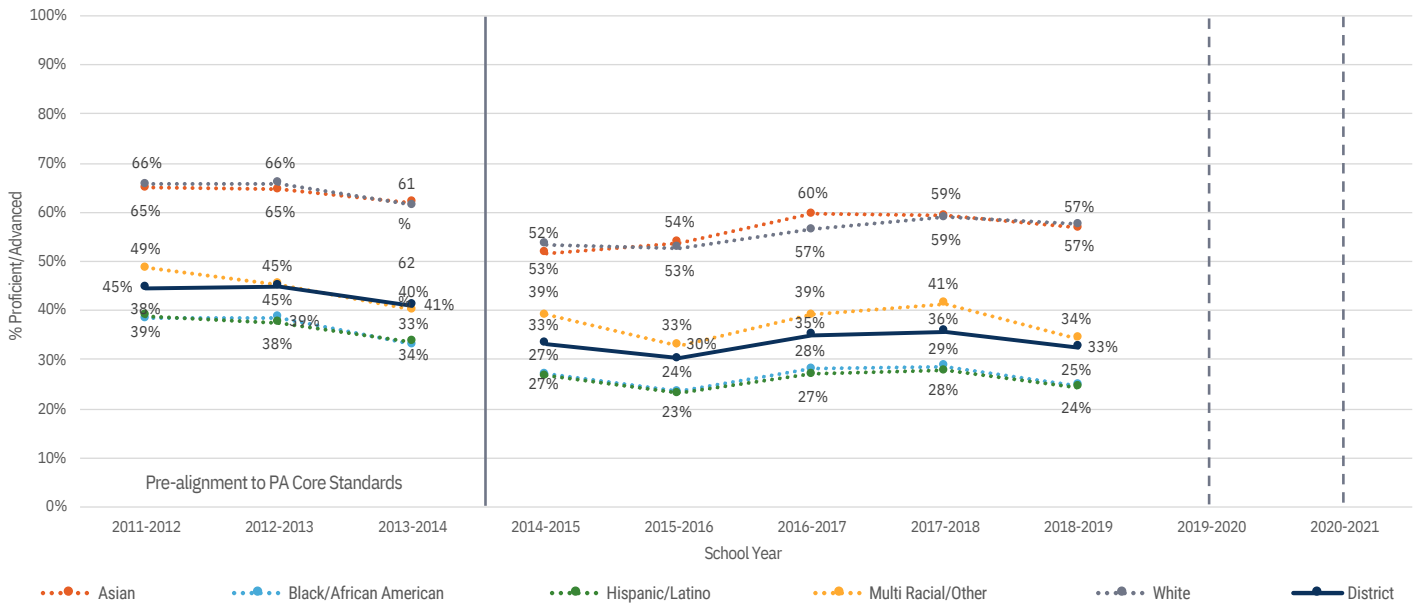
PSSA tests were revised to align with the more rigorous PA Core Standards adopted in the 2014-15 school year. PSSA results before 2014-15 are not comparable to results from the current assessment (2014-15 and onward). Due to COVID-19 school closures in 2019-20, and related participation limitations in 2020-21, accountability data are not available for these years.

Figure 2 - PSSA Math: Percent Proficient and Advanced, Overall and by Race/Ethnicity (Grades 3-8)



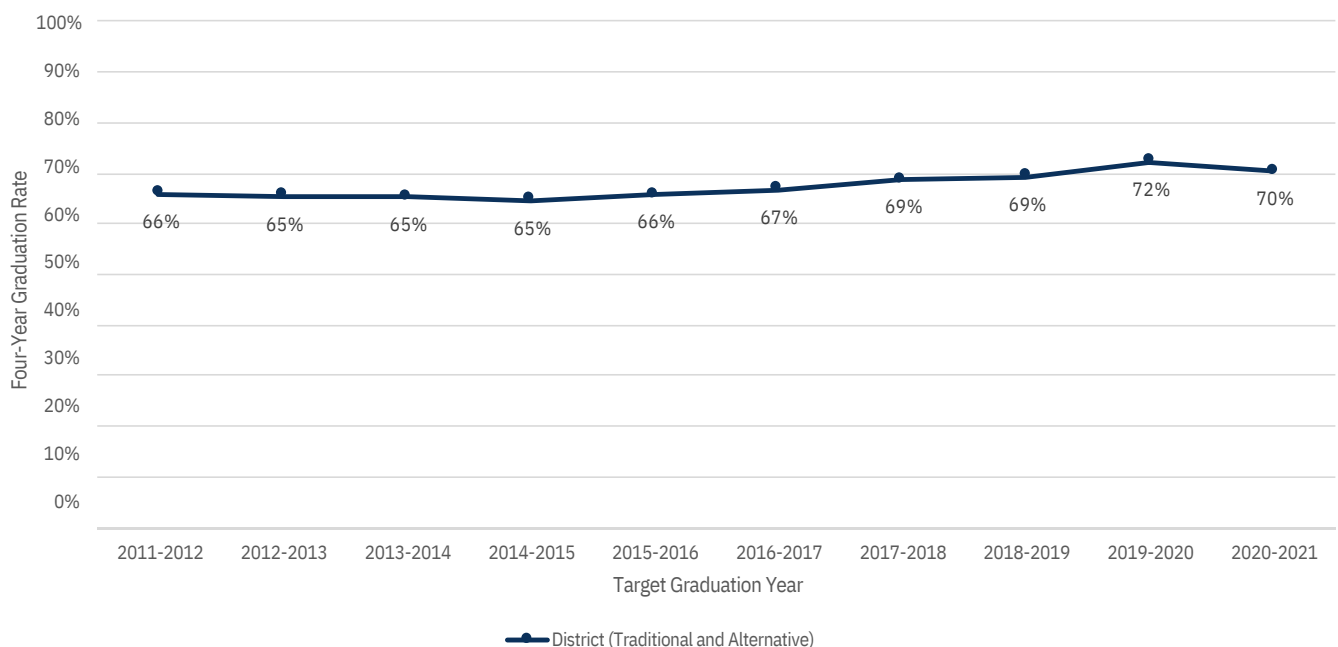
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Figure 3 - PSSA ELA: Percent Proficient and Advanced, Overall and by Race/Ethnicity (Grade 3)



PSSA tests were revised to align with the more rigorous PA Core Standards adopted in the 2014-15 school year. PSSA results before 2014-15 are not comparable to results from the current assessment (2014-15 and onward). Due to COVID-19 school closures in 2019-20, and related participation limitations in 2020-21, accountability data are not available for these years.

Figure 4 - Four-Year Graduation Rate -District, Traditional Schools and Alternative Programs





The Board of Education's Goals & Guardrails

In December 2020, the Board of Education made a deep commitment to improving student achievement with the adoption of its Goals & Guardrails, which define what all students should know, be able to do, and experience to succeed in and beyond the classroom.

They encompass three goals:

- Every student reads on or above grade level
- Every student performs on or above grade level in math
- Every student graduates ready for college and careers

The Guardrails are the following:

- Welcoming and Supportive Schools
- Enriching and Well-rounded School Experiences
- Partnering with Parents/Family Members
- Addressing Racist Practices

The Board's Goals & Guardrails themes were purposefully embedded into the Transition Team committee work so that the focus areas identified by the Board of Education could be examined more in-depth.

The Superintendent's Transition Process

Consistent with his style and approach to leadership, Dr. Watlington commissioned a structured transition process for his entry into the District. The process consists of three phases, as pictured in Figure 5.



Figure 5 - The School District of Philadelphia Transition Process

Phase 1: The First-100 Day Priorities

Dr. Watlington completed the first phase of the transition process, the First-100 Day Priorities, in October 2022. The plan was built around a Listening & Learning Tour designed to elicit community feedback about the schools so that Dr. Watlington could "...learn about the city and hear about what is needed to achieve the School District of Philadelphia's Goals & Guardrails" (SDP website). Dr. Watlington conducted Listening and Learning sessions and heard from more than 2,700 citizens over several months. Important input was gathered from stakeholders during the sessions to inform Dr. Watlington of immediate needs and help him to get to know what is on the minds of community members and citizens.

The predominant themes were the following:

- The need to improve communications and community engagement
- The need to strengthen school safety and climate
- The need to improve facilities
- The need to improve academic achievement
- The need to improve staffing and morale
- The need to better coordinate central office supports to schools

Phase 2: The Transition Team

The Superintendent's Transition Team took place from July thru October 2022. It provided Dr. Watlington with essential information about the District. The team was organized around five sub-committees. Members studied and discussed these five areas and made short-term and long-term recommendations for action.

Phase 3: The Strategic Plan

Insights from Phase 1, the Listening and Learning Tour, coupled with the recommendations from Phase 2, the Transition Team, will inform Phase 3, the development of a new Strategic Plan in Spring of 2023.

A man in a suit is standing on the left, gesturing towards a group of students sitting in a circle. The students are engaged, with some raising their hands. The setting appears to be a classroom or meeting room with a whiteboard in the background.

The Transition Team Sub-Committee Findings

The team was divided into five sub-committees: Student Achievement; Operations; Anti-Racist School Culture; Community Engagement and Communications; and Enriching and Well-Rounded School Experiences. Each sub-committee received an individual charge to investigate its specific area of focus to formulate a comprehensive profile of the School District at Dr. Watlington's entry point. The quantitative and qualitative information that has been captured through the review of District data and the experiences of sub-committee members has enabled a contextualized and detailed account of these five key areas. As a result of the analysis from this process, recommendations were developed to mitigate the current challenges facing the District.



Sub-Committee on Student Achievement

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Charge Statement

The core work of the District is teaching and learning. The major focus of every activity in the District must support classrooms and students achieving at the highest level. The sub-committee's work will advance learning opportunities, particularly for those students who have not yet achieved the level of success needed to access meaningful career and college opportunities.

Background

The Student Achievement Sub-Committee (SAS) was tasked with examining the major aspects of student achievement in the School District of Philadelphia, including teaching and learning programs, school improvement initiatives, and the organizational structure for delivering instructional support to students and schools from the central office. In addition, the SAS examined the equity of opportunity and the status of all groups in the system, particularly English language learners (ELLs) and special education students, including their graduation and dropout rates.

The SAS conducted a detailed review of student achievement data (i.e., PSSA, Keystone, NAEP, etc.) and examined best practices and research on high-performing national and international systems. This body of quantitative and qualitative data, along with the experiences of sub-committee members who have first-hand knowledge of the District, provided a textured understanding of student achievement in the School District of Philadelphia.

Current Status

In its review of student achievement, the SAS identified both strengths and challenges that must be considered as the District moves toward its achievement goals. There are three primary assets that the District brings to the mission of equitable, high-quality, and effective learning: stakeholder commitment, principal focus, and technology. District educators and staff demonstrate that they are committed to ensuring children receive an equitable educational experience. Parents expressed a deep desire to partner with educators to ensure their children benefit from a rigorous educational experience. In particular, principals across the District consistently communicated a focus on teaching and learning, a willingness to be effective instructional leaders, and a prioritization of student achievement. Lastly, the District is a 1:1 device district, classrooms have interactive whiteboards, and WiFi is readily available in schools. The provision and maintenance of these resources paves the way for 21st century learning across the District.

Making the desired and necessary progress on student achievement will require strategic action and focus over time. The SAS identified several areas that will require deep, purposeful attention in order to meet student learning goals. First, overall achievement in English language arts, mathematics, and science needs to improve. Trend data on national, state, and local assessments point to a lack of equitable access to rigorous instruction for all students and consistent achievement gaps across racial groups and among multilingual learners and students with disabilities. Currently, the District does not have a clear theory of action of how it expects to raise student achievement. When initiatives are launched, they rarely go to scale as they come from separate departments in the central office and simply layer on initiative after initiative.

Additionally, while a clear system of teacher and leader support is paramount for the District to turn the tide of student achievement, a system for developing expertise among educators is lacking. Traditionally, professional learning in the District is perceived as a service that the District office or network office staffs provide, which undermines ownership and leadership at the school level. Lastly, while some of the District-adopted tier one instructional materials in English language arts and mathematics materials were externally vetted and are aligned to college and career ready standards, some of the District-adopted materials were deemed “not aligned” to state standards.¹ In addition, the SAS observed a scarcity of educators who deeply understand the architecture, content, embedded content pedagogy and assessments of the tier one materials in English language arts.

Recommendations

In order to advance and build on the strengths the District brings to the pursuit of academic achievement, and in order to address the challenges facing the District, the SAS formulated both short-term and long-term recommendations.

Short-Term Recommendations

1. Develop a clear, focused Instructional Plan that centers on the school as the unit of change. The core pillars of the plan should articulate evidence-based priorities for principals, teachers, students, and parents/families. The pillars of the Instructional Plan should be based on the best practices of high performing schools and systems and should articulate evidence-based priorities for principals, teachers, students, and parents/families. The plan should include guidelines and measurements of progress on each pillar using a gradient scale from early to exceeding.
2. Purposeful alignment of District people, time, and funding should support the following in order to ensure successful implementation of the Instructional Plan:
 - A clear focus on a few key instructional priorities (math or English language arts/English)
 - Distributed and diverse school-based instructional leadership teams
 - Master schedules that allow for regular, school-based, expert-led collaborative learning as the primary professional learning strategy
 - Aligned assessments used according to their purposes
 - Parent and community members as involved and supported partners
 - The use of standards-aligned instructional materials in core academic subjects
3. Communicate the Instructional Plan clearly and widely. Assign a workgroup to cost out and develop a communication strategy on the implementation of the plan. Central to the success of the plan is continuous learning and feedback from school level staff, so include strategies for collecting and acting on feedback.²

In order to model the tenets of the Instructional Plan, incentivize a cohort of schools who commit to engage in the deep work of the instructional plan. Selected schools should:

- engage in collaborative, tier one curriculum-based coaching as the core professional learning strategy,
- create a structure and process to closely monitor the implementation of curriculum-based coaching, and
- identify and support a school-based instructional leadership teams (ILT).

Prioritize funding for early innovation schools to a) make cross-site visits to high performing schools with like students and/or tier one curricular materials, b) provide ILT leadership development, c) provide advance training in literacy or mathematics.

4. Hire a senior strategy advisor or Chief Strategy Officer to lead and oversee the short and long-term implementation of the Strategic Plan. The individual will work with and coach the early adopter schools, work alongside District leaders, and report to the Superintendent.
5. Launch a city-wide attendance monitoring system and strategy to ensure students are in school. Partner with the Mayor’s office, local community leaders, and local celebrity/sports figures to communicate the importance of being in school with families and students. Address the barriers to attendance like health, safety, and economic obstacles in the development of the strategy.

¹The district-adopted materials of greatest concern is Saxon Phonics, which is recommended for teaching foundational skills in K-2 ELA and was not found to be aligned to state standards.

²Implementation strategy recommendations at the district level are designed to support the school level work.

- 6.** Articulate clear curriculum implementation expectations and initiate collaboration among the Board and Superintendent, chiefs, assistant superintendents, principals, teachers, students, and families. Full implementation of adopted, tier one materials must be the norm—visible each day in classrooms and the focus of District-wide training. The scope and sequence documents should include all lessons from the tier one materials, not replace them with disconnected units. Relatedly, classroom observation look-fors should be consistently used across networks and by District senior staff. Observational data should be collected and analyzed with a laser focus on underperforming groups of students (multilingual learners, students with disabilities, Black and Latinx students).
- 7.** Designate a workgroup, comprised of internal and external school finance experts, central office supervisors, and principals, to ensure the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 school budget allocations are equitable and student need-based. A particular focus must be on small schools and neighborhood schools as it relates to a strategy for more equitable funding.
- 8.** Launch a textbook adoption process in ELA/English that includes teachers, teacher leaders, principals, special education leadership, and national experts in literacy and English language acquisition to ensure only standards-aligned instructional materials, including foundational skills, will be approved for adoption across the District.
- 9.** Launch professional learning for the Superintendent’s cabinet twice monthly on the District-adopted instructional materials to better equip District leaders to support schools as they implement standards-aligned tier one mathematics curriculum. Ensure monthly school visits are part of the professional learning strategy.
- 10.** Ensure principals regularly convene parents/family members to provide opportunities to learn about the school’s improvement priorities and how parents/families can support their children at home. Assistant superintendents should collect basic data on these convenings (frequency, dates of occurrence, attendance) to use in supervisory discussions with principals.
- 11.** Provide standard guidance, tools, and timelines to workgroups (e.g., city-wide attendance workgroup) to ensure coherence in approach and deliverables. Components might include team objective, team membership, information gathering, strategies and aligned tasks, and cost benefit analysis.
- 12.** Enlist the Chief of Schools and the Chief of Academic Supports to work with high school assistant superintendents and principals to gradually increase the number of Advanced Placement courses in every high school, beginning in School Year (SY) 2023-24. Consider prioritizing Calculus and English Language & Composition as they have a greater impact for students applying to and matriculating at college.
- 13.** Enlist the Chief of Academic Supports/designee to work with middle grades assistant superintendents and principals to ensure every child ready for Algebra in 8th grade has access to it. In addition, ensure every student has access to world languages in middle school.
- 14.** Implement broader programming (particularly for new ELLs) and expand the use of materials and instructional strategies for the growing number of English Language Learners. Targeted professional development and training for teachers of ELL students should be provided in all content areas.
- 15.** Review the allocations for afterschool activities in schools and review partnerships with the city and non-profit organizations to develop a coherent strategy to expand support to teachers, families, and students to advance learning in areas such as Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics and address issues of out of school time safety and well-rounded academic opportunities.
- 16.** Conduct an audit of the Opportunity Network schools based on data and intensive interviews to assess what schools are effectively educating students and what instructional models are working. Develop recommendations for providing evidence-based alternative learning models.
- 17.** Include 6-8 sitting principals as core members of the Superintendent’s leadership team. Vetting strategic decisions through sitting principals ensures decisions can be implemented at the school level. Additional staff, such as assistant principals, may be needed as support to the lead principals.

Long-Term Recommendations

1. Enlist the Office of Academics to lead a workgroup of teacher leaders to create an online repository of grade level, standard-bearing work that represents curriculum-embedded assignments in ELA.
2. Enlist the Talent and Academics offices to consider the shift from the use of the 2013 Danielson Framework for Teaching to the 2022 Framework for Teaching (FFT) to align with the District's focus on high quality instructional materials, high quality professional learning, and meeting the social and emotional needs of students by integrating 21st century skills.
3. Create a development team and strategy, with clear fundraising goals, to enlist local and national philanthropic and business partners to support the District as it implements the District Strategic Plan.
4. Enlist the support of philanthropy and prioritize local resources to build a Black and Latinx educator development strategy.
5. Enlist an external partner to support the Office of Academics in conducting an audit of special education services. The audit should recommend: a) organizational structures that ensure role clarity between the District, network, and school levels to ensure an efficient and effective continuum of services for students with special needs, b) accountability systems and related metrics at the District, network, and school levels that measure efforts to meet students' needs from the pre-referral stage through placement into specialized services, c) training for building level leaders to ensure efficient response to intervention (RTI) and multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) systems exist across the District that include general education, special education, and related service providers.
6. Conduct an audit of the District's Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs to ensure students benefit from 21st century CTE opportunities in schools that are designed and staffed to ensure an increased number of students graduate with industry certification. The District's next generation of CTE programs must build seamless pathways from secondary to postsecondary education that lead to satisfying, living-wage employment. This effort will require the engagement and coordination of CTE teachers, guidance counselors, middle and high school and college administrators, college faculty, employers, trade unions, industry associations, and state education and workforce development agencies—all working together toward a common goal: to better prepare students for the complex and ever-changing world of work.



Sub-Committee on Operations

Co-Chairs

Dr. Henderson Lewis, former Superintendent
New Orleans Public Schools

Uri Monson, Chief Financial Officer
School District of Philadelphia

Charge Statement

Operational efficiency in the District ensures that schools are staffed with excellent teachers, buses operate safely, financial functions have integrity, and the physical environment of schools are conducive to learning. The sub-committee will assess the current status of organizational and logistical operations crucial to the effective day-to-day functioning and success of the system. The sub-committee will also consider the District's organizational capacity to recruit, onboard, develop, energize, recognize, reward, and retain top talent.

Background

The School District of Philadelphia has made progress in the last several years in the area of finance; however, the District has experienced years of hard times in the area of operations. The District had to overcome challenges with its finances and funding, and thereby must create a clear path forward to organize the work to defray decades of deferred maintenance.

The charge for the Operations sub-committee was to assess the current state of the operations and finances in the District with particular emphasis on the efficiency and effectiveness of the Departments of Finance, Human Resources, and Operations.

Current Status

The District has made tremendous strides over the last eight years to strengthen its financial situation. As Moody's Investor Services stated in December 2018, when it upgraded the District's Bond Rating to investment grade for the first time since 1977, "these [financial] challenges are currently met by a very strong management team which has developed a detailed understanding not only of the district's finances but also the ongoing operational complexities of managing a highly dynamic, large, urban school district."

This fiscal stability has allowed the District to shift its focus from a deficit mindset of layoffs and cuts to more concerted investment efforts in students, staff, and facilities. Moving into the 2015-16 SY, the District had finished five straight annual budgets of year-end deficits. The School District of Philadelphia closed the 2015-16 SY with a positive fund balance, the first in six years. Since stabilizing the fiscal resources in the 2015-16 SY, the District has been able to maintain this more positive status through a combination of accessing additional funding and financial management and enacting policies and procedures enabling a position of fiscal strength.

The finances are now a strong anchor of the District. This has created a path for all departments to allocate resources that support operations and better meet the needs of students and families. However, there is a concern that the District is headed for a funding cliff in the short-term future and it will be important to employ strategies that mitigate its potential effects on schools. The sub-committee's review of the available data revealed the need for strategic work in the areas of finance, operations, and human resources. While the District has embarked on several successful and promising efforts throughout the District, there is a distinct lack of collaboration and systems to effectively implement any District-wide changes.

Recommendations

The District should review its operations including, but not limited to financial practices that support integrity, mutual accountability, and the allocation and alignment of resources to District goals and priorities.

Short-Term Recommendations: Finances

1. Clearly communicate how the state funds District schools and the distinction between how the District funds the District-operated schools.
2. Clearly communicate that projected charter school spending is dictated by existing state laws and regulations, and lack of District control over these financial resources.
3. Educate elected officials at the Commonwealth about the charter school funding formula and its direct impact on disproportionately increasing charter schools' fund rates throughout the system.
4. Identify the District priorities before the start of the budget process (January).
5. Ensure better communication of District priorities throughout the entire system by engaging with school leaders and stakeholders in the development of allocations consistent with District priorities and revenue constraints.
6. Provide more direction and clarity to schools to ensure the use of school-based discretionary funds are aligned to the goals of District priorities, school improvement plans, and compliance requirements.
7. Develop a process to model financial scenarios with senior leadership, the Board, and the community to effectively predict and communicate anticipated funding challenges in future years.
8. Investigate financing options including, but not limited to, P3 public/private partnership financing options as a way to accelerate the funding of building construction.

Long-Term Recommendations: Finances

1. Advocate for state funding reform that more equitably supports public schools in the School District of Philadelphia by providing information, talking points, and strategies to the wide array of stakeholders who can promote change with elected officials at the Commonwealth.
2. Analyze the extent to which the District balances the centralization of resources, and achieves effectiveness of general, state, and federal funds dispersal.
3. Implement a transparent budgeting process that maximizes school-based budgeting aligned to District priorities and compliance requirements.

Short-Term Recommendations: Operations

1. Identify school and District facility's needs and review the plan (with school leaders and the community at large) for addressing capital improvement.
2. Review public data related to the facilities planning process and ensure inter-departmental collaboration to ensure messaging aligns with the overall intent of the Superintendent/Board of Education.
3. Conduct and analyze participant surveys to ensure quality assurance throughout the community engagement process and make modifications as deemed necessary based upon survey data analysis.
4. Develop a communication strategy to share the development of the master facilities plan with the public that provides explicit details, outcomes, and the process for implementing the plan.
5. Conduct a transportation study to assess current transportation processes, systems and capacity; research school district transportation practices to gain efficient transportation service strategies to safely transport students to and from schools.

6. Develop a communication strategy that provides early notification to parents about transportation.
7. Examine hiring actions of vendor service providers and ensure that there are accelerated efforts to consider ongoing Minority & Women-Owned Business Enterprise (MWBE) and community-based supplier/vendors.

Long-Term Recommendations: Operations

1. Develop and execute a master facilities plan to ensure every student attends a school that is conducive to supporting high-quality learning. Specifically, the District must ensure that schools with less than 300 students are able to have a quality educational program.
2. Collaborate with local leaders, community members, faith-based organizations, and elected officials to identify clear timelines, communication protocols, and innovative ways to simultaneously consolidate or co-locate small schools and repurpose buildings to be used for community needs.

Short-Term Recommendations: Human Resources

1. Examine current recruiting and onboarding practices and how well the District attracts, develops, compensates, and retains top talent.
2. Continue to explore and expand alternative pathways into teaching to address the ongoing goals for increasing the number of Black, Latinx, and Asian teachers in the District to address the shrinking teacher workforce, including sustaining the paraprofessional-to-teacher pipeline and formalizing a student-to-teacher pipeline.
3. Review and revise the current evaluation system for central office staff, principals, and teachers to improve both feedback and accountability aligned with key academic priorities.
4. Explore additional opportunities for coverage for teachers during the current labor market shortage of teacher substitutes, including gathering additional feedback on the use of building substitutes and the use of supplemental teachers.
5. Make recommendations to streamline system-wide operations and human resources to achieve excellent support to schools and advance peak organizational efficiency.
6. Conduct focus groups with every level of non-instructional personnel to understand successes, challenges, and areas of improvement to establish communication and customer service expectations for engaging internally and externally (e.g., school administrators are internal customers of the central office; receive feedback on the on-line application system; receive feedback on how the District communicates the status, assignment, and placement of new hires to schools and departments).

Long-Term Recommendations: Human Resources

1. Create a sustainability model in a changing labor market that addresses key areas of persistent gaps in staffing to determine what recruitment, compensation, or retention efforts to adopt.
2. Study and survey recent teacher hires to understand District recruitment, development, support, and retention practices in order to remove barriers to a seamless hiring process.
3. Provide the support and development new hires need to be successful in the District so they choose to remain.
4. Develop a teacher career ladder that enables teachers and paraprofessionals to advance themselves without leaving District employment.
5. Review and update policies and procedures related to the transfer of employees to ensure that clear communication with affected personnel is both the expectation and the standard way of doing business.
6. Develop regular reports highlighting key hiring performance metrics with the goal of ensuring the human resource department is efficient in hiring the best school personnel.



Sub-Committee on Anti-Racist District Culture

Co-Chairs

Dr. Camika Royal, Professor, Loyola University

Dr. Sabriya Jubilee, Chief of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion,
School District of Philadelphia

Charge Statement

The District is committed to all students learning in a safe, supportive, and welcoming environment that does not limit their opportunities to receive rigorous, non-biased, and engaging instruction. The sub-committee will investigate and consider elements that impact anti-racist teaching, both positive and negative, and factors which impede progress.

Background

The District created its first Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in July 2021. Borne from the work of the District Equity Coalition, the Office of DEI was created to provide organizational structure and guidance for what it means to be an anti-racist, equitable school District.

The District is fervently committed to cultivating an anti-racist organization where all students and adults enjoy a safe, supportive, and welcoming environment that is culturally and linguistically inclusive. The District strives to create central office and school cultures that systematize students' opportunities to receive rigorous, unbiased, and engaging instruction. Equity in the District has been defined as providing the means to cultivate prosperity and liberation for students and staff. Starting with historically marginalized populations, it is characterized by removing barriers, increasing access and inclusion, building trusting relationships, and creating a shared culture of social responsibility and commitment to organizational accountability.

The sub-committee on Anti-Racist District Culture investigated and considered elements that impact an anti-racist school culture and teaching environment. The team defined racism as the following: combining biases, preferences, and/or prejudices with institutional power to preserve the desires of those once privileged; to prevent marginalized people and oppressed groups from being centered and prioritized, and from securing power, from being included, from prosperity and liberation. While examining the feasibility of anti-racism in the School District of Philadelphia, the sub-committee was compelled to review other forms of oppression that are not mutually exclusive to the original charge including classism and socioeconomic repression, gender oppression, and ableism.

Current Status

The District has adopted an Equity Lens that requires District decision makers, policy development, and programming be guided by the following four areas of consideration: advancing equity, stakeholder engagement, funding and resourcing, and progress monitoring and evaluation. In addition, the Board's Guardrail 4, and its leading indicators, commit the District to anti-oppressive and equity-focused work. These consist of eliminating systemic racism within the District, increasing Black/African American and Hispanic/Latinx Student enrollment in Criteria-Based high schools, and reducing disproportionate suspension rates. Each indicator has its own targets and is monitored annually to track progress.

The District has a number of strengths as it relates to working towards equitable/anti-racist practices. Through the work of the School District of Philadelphia Equity Coalition, the District's Equity Framework was developed. Consisting of five core components (the School District of Philadelphia's equity definition, Equity Lens, beliefs, commitments, and a glossary), this comprehensive tool provides District-wide guidance on what it means to be an anti-oppressive organization.

Beginning the 2021-22 school year, and continuing through this current year, all Board of Education policies undergo an Equity Lens review, complete with edits to the policy and the corresponding administrative procedures in an effort to ensure greater equity at the policy level. Board Policy 252 has been a leading example of what is possible when students are the experts of their own experience. In SY15-16, a student-led process describing what they would like to see the District enact in order to feel safe at school was convened resulting in a set of policy recommendations that were adopted without amendment by the School Board in June 2016. In 2022, the City of Philadelphia enacted a similar ordinance that largely incorporated many of the recommendations originally formulated by students of the District to protect Trans, non-binary, and GNC citizens all over Philadelphia. In addition, the District has prioritized professional learning around equity for school leaders (i.e., principals and APs), central office leaders, and teachers.

The sub-committee noted several challenges. Philadelphia public and charter schools, as well as the District, employed nearly 1,200 fewer Black teachers combined last school year, compared to 20 years ago, according to a [Research for Action report](#).³ Teacher demographics do not reflect the diversity of the student population. From 2014-2015 to 2021-2022, the number of Black male principals decreased by 25%. In order for the District school leaders' racial demographics to mirror its student racial demographics, the District would need to double the number of Black male principals, quadruple the number of Hispanic principals, and triple the number of Asian principals.

In addition, the sub-committee noted that challenges exist as it relates to the District's current progress monitoring of equity initiatives, access to equity professional development for all staff, coordination and collaboration with the department of curriculum and instruction to ensure materials in ELA, mathematics, and other content areas align with the District's equity definition. Lastly, there is a need to more intentionally survey students to understand students' perceptions of rigor, relevance, and relatability in regards to curriculum and instruction.

Recommendations

This sub-committee is putting forth recommendations to support the District in its pursuit of an anti-racist culture. There is an emphasis on keeping children and staff at the center of decision-making and making a concerted effort to understand an individual's experiences.

Short-Term Recommendations

1. **Alignment of Systems.** Create a system of alignment between our key beliefs about equity and the data we collect to help us assess our progress toward achieving those beliefs.
2. **Make data more transparent and more easily communicated to the public.** While there is information available in spreadsheets and databases, reviewing this information is time and labor intensive and may require special skills to interpret. For example, the District could:
 - Map data and create infographics to help the public understand what the District is doing well and where there is need for growth, opportunities, and improvement.
 - Create and make transparent an equity-centered talent data dashboard that includes hiring, retention, promotions, and termination data by race/gender.
3. **Equitable Access to Criteria-Based (Special Admit) Schools.** Ensure that every K-8 school offers the courses that are required for entry into criteria-based schools (i.e., algebra, STEM courses, or foreign language) to ensure full accessibility to Criteria-Based, magnet, CTE, or other schools with special programming for all students in the District. An emphasis should be on students with marginalized identities and neighborhood schools in the poorest zip codes in Philadelphia.
4. **Equity-based staffing model.** Ensure both (i) every school has a standard administrative staffing model, i.e., principal, assistant principal, nurse, secretary, counselor, and climate manager, to start, that also takes equity into account regarding needs of the population (for example, some schools may need additional counselors or nurses due to the complexities of student needs), and (ii) additional allocation of per pupil funds for staffing using an equity lens based upon the complexity of the school's population.

³The Need for More Teachers of Color by Leana Cabral, Mary Eddins, David Lapp, Saxon Nelson from April 2022.

5. Progress Monitoring. The District must develop system-wide data processes to regularly monitor and ensure easy access to well defined equity data to promote public access and transparency. District-wide tools and strategies are needed to measure the effectiveness of equity-focused professional development.
6. Develop policy and practice(s) that are instructive about ensuring the inclusive nature of curricular materials and instruction. A formal partnership with the Office of Curriculum and Instruction (i.e., Curriculum and Instruction Equity Task Force) must be established to regularly review Math, ELA, and other content area instructional resources and materials relative to their alignment with the District's definition of equity. District teaching and learning should promote a sense of belonging for students.
7. Create consistency for special academic/enrichment opportunities (i.e., algebra, STEM courses, and foreign language) across schools to ensure full accessibility to Criteria-Based, magnet, CTE, or other schools with special programming for all students.

Long-Term Recommendations

1. Develop a District-wide professional learning plan for all District staff aligned to equity and anti-oppression ideology and practices using the District Equity Framework and embed an evaluation process to assess the impact on student learning.
2. Develop an equity/anti-racist learning hub for all District staff to facilitate real time learning that develops/refines skills and capacity to embody equity principles in their daily work.
3. Develop an equity-centered and comprehensive approach for employees' career advancement (pathways/career ladder for teaching and leadership) that centers on historically marginalized populations, including demographic and impact goals, benchmarks and resources.
4. Provide employees' with a well-being survey (monthly) and offer supports and services by the central office to school leaders, based on indicated needs (quarterly).
5. Prioritize hiring more school counselors in the highest need schools to foster a culture of inclusion and care that includes more open, regular, interactive communication and consultation with students and their families.
6. Ensure coordination of equity-focused professional development sessions and measure the alignment of professional development opportunities that advance equity across the networks.
7. Support inclusive practice by regularly surveying students' to assess their social-emotional learning opportunities. More pointedly, the District should seek to gain information about students' feelings regarding the rigor, relatability, and relevance of the curriculum and instruction.



Sub-Committee on Community Engagement and Communications

Co-Chairs

Dr. James Earl Davis
Interim Dean, Temple University

Kathryn Block
Chief of Communications, School District of Philadelphia

Charge Statement

The District seeks to establish a culture of respect and trust with all members of the school community through ongoing communication and collaboration. The sub-committee will provide information that will strengthen community engagement in support of District students and their families.

Background

The Office of Family and Community Engagement (FACE) comprises 60 total staff members that are organized across seven key areas: Family Engagement Schools Team; Young Family Empowerment & Education Pathways; Language Access Services & Multilingual Family Support; Outreach and Education; District Solutions and Constituent Relations; Operations & Accountability; and Management & Administration Support Services. The Office of Communications comprises nine people, structured around four centers: Media Relations; Internal Communications; Social Media and Creative Services; and Website Management.

The Community Engagement and Communications Sub-committee (CECS) focused on ways in which these functions are aligned, effective, and can be strengthened to establish a culture of respect and trust with all members of the school community through ongoing communication and collaboration. The sub-committee's work was two-fold with respect to both discrete and connected functions of community engagement and communications. The scope of this work included reviewing the District's current structures and commitments to community engagement and strategic partnerships. Sub-committee members also reviewed the District's communications plan and practices, including tools and strategies across media relations, internal and external communications, social media, and website management. The core values of respect and trust point to long-term intentional commitments and actions, requiring on-going and reciprocal communications and collaboration.

Current Status

A number of internal and external elements - the COVID-19 pandemic, Philadelphia's crisis of gun violence, the lack of trust in public institutions, issues such as understaffing, climate, and limited resources in the schools - are all impacting the District. These internal and external elements have resulted in heightened levels of trauma, grief, and fear among students, families, and staff. The sub-committee found important, and often unnoticed, community engagement and communications assets and opportunities that are mitigating these pervasive problems.

The District is committed to working in, and with, communities. For example, the Office of Family and Community Engagement has clear programs and systems in place to support family-community-school partnerships, build families' ability to support student learning at home, and support volunteers. It conducts school-based workshops, Title 1 meetings, and manages the parent portal as a key tool to give parents direct access to school-related information about their child and child's school.

Likewise, the sub-committee found strengths in the Office of Communications (OOC) and its current staff and practices in support of the District's communications goals. While small, given the size of the District, the OOC: manages the District's dynamic and growing social media platforms; successfully leads the annual back-to-school, school selection, pre-kindergarten and kindergarten registration, and talent recruitment marketing campaigns; implements the District's monthly staff e-newsletter as well as staff and student recognition efforts; and drives positive new stories with local and national outlets. The OOC also prioritizes the emergency and crisis communications supports to schools whenever needed. The OOC and FACE work closely together, and the Back-to-School Bus Tour exemplifies the collaboration between the offices.

The sub-committee was impressed with the Office of Strategic Partnerships' work that collaborates with schools, District offices, and partner organizations to help foster trusting and purposeful relationships that contribute to academic programming for students. The responsibility of this office is to assist schools in identifying areas of need and connecting external partners, at no cost, to establish strong collaborations that align with the Board's Goals and Guardrails. There are many of these strong resource partnerships in schools that can serve as models for impactful community engagement.

The sub-committee also acknowledged that the District has outstanding research and data systems that collect large amounts of data, so wide-ranging information is readily available. However, sub-committee members raised concerns about what is being done with these data. Concerns about how data is used to inform future decision making creates a reluctance to participate in data collection, which may make the data not representative of a variety of groups. For example, during SY 2021-22 and the COVID-19 pandemic, only about half of school principals complete the District-wide survey annually, a decrease from previous years.

While there are strengths to leverage, much more needs to be done to strengthen community engagement and communications, especially as it relates to building a culture of trust and respect. For example, while every school is assigned a FACE liaison, there is a lack of consistency and transparency in time allocations, number of schools served, and frequency of school visits. Each school in the District has a School Advisory Council and a Parent Engagement Plan. However, in many cases, they are underutilized as instrumental foundations for effective engagement. In addition, there was a recognition that more work needs to be done to support principals and principal supervisors as they manage communications around school level incidents or system-wide initiatives. At times, principals and principal supervisors do not feel coordinated communications supports, and they are required to communicate with limited expertise or timely support. Better coordinated support would increase levels of trust and feelings of respect amongst staff.

Communication is not simply an end product or linear, rather a dynamic process where information comes in and goes out of the District. Building partnerships and community ties through communications is as important as the academic curriculum in transforming the District. As such, there is a need to shift how the District frames its communications functions and invest in the resources needed to create and sustain authentic two-way relationships across many stakeholder groups.

Recommendations

This sub-committee is putting forth recommendations to build a path forward toward improving trust and creating a culture of true partnership with its staff, students, families, and communities. This is a long-term endeavor. Establishing a true culture of respect and trust takes time and positive interactions, and requires the District to engage positively with an attitude of collaboration and cooperation. The sub-committee believes that a commitment to these recommendations that are prioritized, well resourced, and implemented with fidelity and accountability will yield results over time.

Short-Term Recommendations

1. Co-create, resource, and drive accountability to a customer service model.
 - Establish shared responsibility across central office and schools.
 - Co-define, operationalize, and drive accountability to shared behaviors, expectations and processes to support a culture of trust and respect both internally and externally. (*Examples: Establish a trusting and respectful code of conduct for everyone, standardizing how we welcome people in schools and offices, inquiry response protocols, phone/email responsiveness protocols, etc.*)

2. Invest in two-way engagement and communication efforts that expand opportunities for meaningful relationship building and idea sharing between the District, schools, staff, and the families and communities the District serves.
 - Invest in new FACE liaison positions to further strengthen connections between schools and families and to help families better understand and access District resources.
 - Launch a new two-way communication and discussion management tool to support in-person, community-based conversations throughout the year.
 - Establish a Communications Council, with representation from offices and schools, to better inform communications practices and messaging and to serve as ambassadors for District news and information.
 - Expand the Superintendent’s “Advisory Council” model beyond students to include school leaders and other stakeholders.
 - Reimagine executive team meetings for greater two-way engagement and shared decision making by including principal and teacher representation.
 - Strategically identify opportunities to provide principals and key central office staff talking points in advance of big decisions or initiatives that will need to be clarified/explained at the school level.
3. Make it easier for families to navigate the District and access key information by redesigning the District website and expanding communications efforts.
4. Re-envision the District approach to data, information gathering, and information sharing.
 - Simplify surveys, set expectations for how data will be used, show evidence of how data/information is informing decision making. Otherwise, consider not doing it, in favor of other feedback options.
 - Respectfully close the loop when feedback is provided by stakeholders by thanking participants, acknowledging what was learned, how it is being used, and if information is not being acted on, explaining the reasoning.
 - Establish and follow a predictable calendar/guide, which shares findings so that families and staff know when, where, and how they will be able to review reports and findings.

Long-Term Recommendations

1. Dramatically expand organizational capacity to strengthen engagement, communication, and storytelling.
 - Strategically invest in project management resources that expand the District’s capacity to collaboratively plan and execute major initiatives well in advance—with all stakeholders impacted by each initiative at the table to help explore ideas and inform decision making – while continuing to support the increasing day-to-day needs of schools.
 - Conduct an audit of the Office of Communications to determine the appropriate staffing levels, i.e., a dedicated social media manager, additional media relations positions, additional internal communications managers, webmaster support, etc.
2. Strengthen community partnerships to increase student-centered supports to schools without placing further burden on schools/school leaders to manage them.
 - Invest in partnership coordinator positions, especially for high-need schools or for each network, to better identify, implement, manage, and sustain co-curricular and extracurricular programs that strengthen student engagement.
 - Create a compensation model for internal staff to incentivize staff-led partnership programs in schools.
 - Establish and intentionally leverage partnerships with trusted community groups and organizations that can deepen our reach and serve as bridges to key communities, especially those that may be difficult to reach.
3. Evaluate the content, implementation, and effectiveness of current parent and family engagement policies, including School Advisory Councils and School Engagement Plans, and develop strategies to improve: school-family communication; parent and family involvement in decision making; and school-family collaboration and conflict resolution.



Sub-Committee on Enriching and Well-Rounded School Experiences

Co-Chairs

Dr. Andrea Kane
Professor, University of Pennsylvania

Dr. Evelyn Nuñez
Chief Schools Officer, School District of Philadelphia

Charge Statement

The School District of Philadelphia believes that for students to be well educated, they must be exposed to a variety of learning experiences in and outside the classroom. The sub-committee will explore the extent to which the District is providing a well-rounded education that affords students many opportunities for enrichment, exploration, and talent development.

Background

The District has recognized the need for greater collaboration in understanding the full landscape of co-curricular offerings in the District and shared initial steps for collecting more detailed information about student participation. In the 2021-2022 School Year, the Chief of Schools Office began a centrally coordinated pilot of after school enrichment programs utilizing American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding.

The pilot program included contracted vendors at schools that provided direct services to students and contracts with vendors who trained school staff in leading after-school enrichment programs. This pilot provided limited access and availability to comprehensive data about the number of vendors and programs that exist across District schools and rate of student participation. There is still an acknowledged need for a larger, long-term project that will intentionally systematize providing equitable access to co-curricular and enrichment programming for all District students.

The Enriching and Well-Rounded School Experiences (EWSE) sub-committee was tasked with reviewing the holistic learning experiences of District students with a focus on determining the breadth of co-curricular programmatic offerings as well as the factors that contribute to the rate of student engagement and participation.

The sub-committee members had in-depth discussions to develop a definition of “well-rounded and enriching education,” but agreed to the following working definition: The District believes that for students to be well educated, they must be exposed to a variety of learning experiences in and outside the classroom. Well-rounded enriching experiences for students require equitable access to athletics, clubs, and co-curricular experiences that occur within and outside of the classroom across all elementary, middle, and high schools.

Additionally, in order for every student to access well-rounded school experiences, the District must also provide support for basic human and academic needs. The latter includes safe learning environments that support academic rigor in Mathematics, English, Science, History/Social Studies, the Arts, Career Technical Education, World Languages, and Physical Education. The former involves basic needs of food, safety, learning materials, etc., and physical conditions that include libraries, athletic spaces, technology, and adequate recreational spaces.

Lastly, it is the sub-committee's belief that if schools offer, coordinate, and support robust and enriching experiences, student engagement and achievement will increase.

Current Status

The School District of Philadelphia has executed a multi-pronged approach in their endeavor to build systemic programs that promote universal student access to an enriched and well-rounded education. The District believes that for students to be well educated, they must be exposed to a variety of learning experiences in and out of the classroom. In the District, this includes culturally responsive arts instruction, athletics, and after school programming provided by the District and external vendor partnerships.

Currently, there are already several areas of strengths within the District around participation in arts, athletics, and partnership relationships. Overall, the District is near-track towards meeting its 2025-26 Guardrail Indicator 2.1 Goal. 92.1% of students in kindergarten through grade 8 are enrolled in visual and/or performing arts courses. Three out of every four schools are also above the 93.3% annual target for the year. In addition, athletics has been a longstanding bright spot for the District. In fact, the 21-22 School Year marked the first time a District school won a state championship in boys tennis (“big shout out to the Julia R. Masterman School Boys Tennis Team”). Lastly, the District enjoys the participation of many approved partners who provide support for programs. The District values the partnership of the City of Philadelphia and other trusted partners in providing critical services and resources for students and their families.

To build on those strengths, there must be an increase in systemic collaboration. While there are many offices within the District that directly provide for enriching and well-rounded student experiences, they often work in silos. This central issue has caused redundancy of service, inefficiencies of funding, and barriers to universal student access to co-curricular programming. Additionally, although the District has expanded opportunities in the visual and performing arts, staffing structures and the prioritization of tested subjects has adversely affected building a more robust culture for investment of resources in the Arts. There must also be attention to overcome inequitable access to co-curricular experiences, particularly for K-8 students and educators. In addition, some small schools are not allotted adequate funding to provide Music and Art. The current District school budget guideline requires schools to select Music or Art. Therefore, students will not receive a certified teacher for both subjects. Additionally, the classroom teacher is required to provide the instruction for the subject if there is no certified teacher. Lastly, the most tenable challenge facing the Division of Athletics moving forward is the continued recovery plan from the disruption caused by the pandemic.

Recommendations

The School District of Philadelphia enthusiastically embraces the importance of co-curricular and enrichment programming for all students. There are multiple pathways for students to participate in co-curricular activities in the District that include District-run programming and paid vendors that operate within their respective agreements for service. Additionally, the Office of Strategic Partners facilitates some of the work of no cost contractors in the District.

To sustain and advance successful efforts that promote a well-rounded education for District students, the EWSE sub-committee submitted both short-term and long-term recommendations.

Short-Term Recommendations

1. Ensure all principals understand the process to access and utilize the support and resources from the Office of School Partnerships to maximize opportunities for all students in all schools.
2. Develop a definition of “enriching and well-rounded experiences” (including, but not limited to arts and sports). Develop a 9–12-month action plan that would use an inclusive process to develop a clear and measurable definition of “enriching and well-rounded experiences” and chart a path to making those opportunities measurable and available to all students. The plan and pathway should have the following implementation guidelines:
 - Be specific and easily understood by educators and families.
 - Specify the physical conditions for success that are necessary to meet the definition of “enriching and well-rounded.” This should include available facilities (libraries, athletic space, technology, play space, etc.).
 - Discuss the basic needs that must be met for all students (e.g., food, safety, learning materials, etc.) and be explicit about who is responsible for ensuring that those needs are met. Include provision of services like prevention programs, nutrition programs, counseling, etc. (that are provided by the District or by the City) that may not be explicitly in the definition of “enriching and well-rounded experiences,” but are necessary preconditions for any enriching experience.
3. Create SMART Goals aligned with the definition that:
 - Measure student level experiences and participation and examine offerings at every school during or after school and elsewhere in the community.
 - Include assessments of what the District delivers, what the City provides, and what vendors and partners deliver (i.e., shared delivery).

4. Set minimum standards for student accessibility to programmatic offerings that meet the minimum evidence-based “dosage” that is required to achieve the exposure of skill development goals for students regardless of school size and a mechanism to achieve those standards.
5. Identify what the District currently counts (including data collected by the District, the City, and other large partners) at the student and school levels relevant to the definition and goals.
6. Identify what the District is not counting but should be counting at the school and student levels (e.g., dosage experienced by students, participation by students in after-school clubs, services provided by non-District providers, etc).
7. Develop a data collection, analysis, and reporting system that is aligned with the definition and quantifiable goals and incorporates an understanding of data collected and analyzed by the city.
8. Identify the barriers to expanding access to the elements included in the definition of “well-rounded and enriching” and to the specific goals articulated. This should include, but not be limited to:
 - An examination of difficulties in partnering with the District to provide programming.
 - A focus on implementation of academic curriculum that may stifle well-rounded experiences.
 - A current reliance on personal relationships to secure high-quality enrichment programs.
 - The incentive structure for principals and staff that may not encourage attention and resources for enrichment programs.
 - A review of how issues of safety impact students’ participation in after-school athletics, co-curricular programs, and clubs.
9. Recommend action steps to achieve the goals articulated for an “enriching and well-rounded” education experience.
 - Develop a concrete set of steps that the District and partners will take, with specific timeframes, to increase students’ “well-rounded and enriching” experiences in ways aligned with the definition and goals.
 - Identify areas for cross-school collaboration to increase opportunities for enriching experiences.
 - Harness the efforts of District and non-District providers to maximize the impact of enriching experiences for students.
 - Define the professional learning opportunities that will be offered and/or required for District staff and partners to ensure they are prepared to implement the action steps.
 - Consider developing an individualized “transcript” of enriching experiences representative of the programming every student has participated in.
 - Plan for how to use data as a marketing tool for schools and the District to capture the full range of opportunities for kids.
 - Consider using the City’s Program Locator to make the full range of available opportunities (in and out of school) known and accessible to all District families.
 - Develop policies and processes that facilitate (and do not impede) the implementation of enriching experiences.
 - Create a directory of District-approved partners and vendors.
 - Devise a protocol for shared delivery of services in collaboration with District partners that explicitly explains how partners engage with schools to support and serve students.

Long-Term Recommendations

1. Reimagine what a school day looks like and aim to be visionary beyond the narrow, including messaging for principals and teachers; operationalizing the approach; and providing no cost opportunities for everything for ALL students.
2. Every school should have a no cost afterschool program.
3. Provide transportation so that students who are normally picked up by daycare and students who ride the bus can participate in afterschool co-curricular programs, athletics, and clubs.
4. Ensure all students have access to afterschool athletic programs.
5. Require all schools to offer co-curriculars and create a menu of co-curricular offerings by grade band (elementary, middle, and high).
6. The funding structure/formula should be modified to ensure that 100% of our schools provided Music and Art to students.



Conclusion

The work of the Transition Team resulted in 91 short-term and long-term recommendations and suggestions. The collective advice of members will help Dr. Watlington in phase three of the transition process – creating a Strategic Plan and identifying actionable and measurable goals for the future.

Future Focus

There is a strong need to be innovative in the future - to develop new, strategic ways of operating, particularly in the areas of communication, student achievement, and operations. Dr. Watlington will need to carefully consider all of the recommendations made by the sub-committees and select those changes that can have the greatest effect. The strategic planning phase will help to prioritize and refine the most impactful recommendations and actions. Dr. Watlington will also need to consider and carefully select which systems, safeguards, and processes need to be implemented to create continuous improvement in the District.

While much needs to be accomplished, given the talent and dedication of many District staff members, much progress can be made. And with the information from the three phases of the transition process, Dr. Watlington's vision for the District – **to become the fastest-improving, large, urban school district in America** – can be realized.



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