

# Action Plan v1.0

The School District of Philadelphia

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January 7, 2013

## 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 Goals, Strategies 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. Developed during three months of listening, learning, reviewing, and research, it is a "living document" subject to change as new facts are gathered and new evidence comes to light.

## THIS ACTION PLAN IS AVAILABLE ONLINE

[www.philasd.org/actionplan](http://www.philasd.org/actionplan)

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: GOALS, STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS IN BRIEF

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**Anchor Goal 1:** Improve academic outcomes for students in all the schools we manage and in the charter schools we authorize

**Anchor Goal 2:** Ensure the financial stability and sustainability of the District

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**Strategy 1:**

**ACHIEVE AND SUSTAIN FINANCIAL BALANCE**

- A. Capture cost savings and track progress against the Five Year Financial Plan
- B. Meet the immediate financial challenge of Fiscal Year 2014
- C. Implement a data-driven budgeting process
- D. Institute financial controls
- E. Seek additional revenues
- F. Effectively manage grants

**Strategy 2:**

**IMPROVE STUDENT OUTCOMES**

- A. Utilize data to assess student needs
- B. Sustain high academic standards and expectations
- C. Advance the implementation of Response to Instruction and Intervention
- D. Prioritize early literacy
- E. Cultivate academic tenacity
- F. Clarify the profiles of college and career ready graduates
- G. Track students' progress to graduation, college and career
- H. Develop a high school improvement strategy
- I. Increase access to Career and Technical Education
- J. Meet the needs of students in Special Education
- K. Meet the needs of English Language Learners
- L. Improve alternative education
- M. Review outside educational institutions
- N. Improve student nutrition

**Strategy 3:**

**DEVELOP A SYSTEM OF EXCELLENT SCHOOLS**

- A. Improve school safety and climate
- B. Implement the Facilities Master Plan
- C. Enhance the physical environments of schools
- D. Clarify school autonomy
- E. Develop innovative school models
- F. Turn around low performing schools
- G. Become a top-quality charter school authorizer

- H. Collaborate with other school operators
- I. Develop school performance measure

**Strategy 4:**

**IDENTIFY AND DEVELOP COMMITTED, CAPABLE PEOPLE**

- A. Enhance teacher recruitment and hiring practices
- B. Implement teacher, principal and specialist evaluations
- C. Strengthen teacher development
- D. Create meaningful opportunities for teacher collaboration
- E. Provide effective principal support
- F. Increase capacity of principals and leadership teams
- G. Strengthen the principal pipeline
- H. Clearly define administrative staff roles and performance evaluations
- I. Launch the Transformation Corps

**Strategy 5:**

**BECOME A PARENT AND FAMILY-CENTERED ORGANIZATION**

- A. Improve customer service
- B. Launch additional, effective School Advisory Councils
- C. Establish clear processes for parent/family input
- D. Support the unique needs of parents
- E. Empower parents with information

**Strategy 6:**

**BECOME AN ALIGNED, ACCOUNTABLE ORGANIZATION**

- A. Institute a change management program
- B. Institute performance management processes
- C. Improve data accuracy and application
- D. Implement effective, aligned business processes
- E. Invest in core systems
- F. Ensure testing integrity
- G. Cultivate and sustain partnerships
- H. Update the organization structure

## PREFACE: A CALL TO ACTION

*Dr. William Hite, Superintendent*

Since taking the helm as Superintendent of The School District of Philadelphia (SDP), I have met people in every corner of the city with a common stake in our city's education system. I have visited more than 50 schools, and met countless students, teachers, administrators, and parents. I have addressed groups throughout our community, including neighborhood associations, clergy, business leaders, aspiring educators, city officials and philanthropists.

Mostly, I have listened to their concerns – and yours – and thoughtfully considered questions regarding the District's prospects for providing high-quality academic programs in every school, attracting and retaining top-notch talent, ensuring long-term financial sustainability, and cultivating a sense of excellence at all levels. In addition, I have reviewed many plans that have been developed for our District, along with our data on college readiness, current academic performance and graduation rates, which are up this year. (For a full list of the sources used in preparing this plan, please see **Exhibit 1.**)

This document is a reflection of what I have learned, in consultation with my team, after spending these first three months listening to, conversing with, and learning from our staff and stakeholders.

Throughout these conversations, two key themes have consistently emerged: We must do more to prepare our students for the world beyond our school doors, and we must position the District for fiscal survivability.

In the pages that follow, you will see a clear articulation of the two Goals that will anchor our work and the ambitious metrics by which we will measure our progress towards graduating students prepared for success in college and careers. These Goals encompass the most important actions and investments for the District, as envisioned by the entire SDP leadership team. This is an introduction to what will be an ongoing process to continually refine and improve on our strategy by actively and systematically engaging school leaders, teachers, District leaders and staff alongside families and our partners.

This evidence-based Action Plan is our call to action, our means of creating our own luck, as we take ownership of the District and do whatever it takes to ensure that our students are successful.

This will not be the final statement on how I will operate throughout my time as Superintendent, nor should you expect a dazzling array of ideas with no plan for action. Given the challenging reality of the District's finances, this document intends to signal our priorities in light of what evidence and research tell us will provide the best return on the public's investment. As we pursue thoughtful, thorough implementation, it is my intention that everyone will see something within these pages that strikes a chord.

For teachers, the center of our enterprise, this plan outlines not only high expectations, but high degrees of support as we strive to make the craft of teaching more professional.

For principals and school leadership teams, we strive to help in focusing your time and energy around the right work at the right time.

For District leaders, we hope to reinforce our belief in the importance of your work and its connection to the classroom.

For all employees, this plan acknowledges the value of your contributions particularly in a setting that increasingly relies on you to create the capacity to do what we have to do.

For students, this plan is driven by our complete confidence that you can and will succeed, and our appreciation of our first responsibility: provide an education setting that enables you to do so.

And for all Philadelphia residents and families (and those thinking about raising families in the city), I want you to know that we are dedicated to serving you far better even in the midst of these tough times, and being good stewards of public money. Your children are the reason why we do what we do.

## FORWARD

### THE VALUES THAT DRIVE OUR WORK

- All students can and will succeed academically, and become lifelong learners.
- We are here to serve the needs of parents and families in preparing children for productive lives.
- Teachers are our most important contributors to student success. Teaching is an honored profession, and it is imperative to provide teachers with opportunities to improve their practice.
- Principals who demonstrate success should have freedom and flexibility to manage their buildings and staff, including instructional, operational and personnel decision-making – all within the context of excellent practice around school safety and climate, instruction and extra-curricular activities.
- The school is the location of the most important action and improvement effort.
- The role of central administration is a) to intervene with evidence-based actions in schools that are not demonstrating results; b) to provide efficient and effective services to all schools; c) to establish the quality standards of practice that will provide a baseline for all District-managed schools; and d) to be good stewards of the public trust and responsibilities.
- People are our most important asset. We will work with the organizations that represent all of our employees in the best interests of our students.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF DOING THINGS WELL

We in the education field know a lot about what success looks like – locally, nationally and internationally. In Philadelphia, we have some of the best public schools in the region,<sup>1</sup> and many bright spots of innovation and learning. Bucking recent trends, our graduation rate is up by 4% this year. While we have the best, we also have a lot of variability. Routinely half of our students score below proficient on math and reading exams, starting in the third grade and continuing through 11<sup>th</sup> grade. Half of our African-American and less than half of our Latino male students graduate from high school.

We can and will, therefore, devote ourselves relentlessly to two simple constants: doing what works according to the facts gathered from successes locally, nationally and internationally, and doing those things well.

Firstly, this means that we will follow the evidence of success wherever it leads us, and more importantly, wherever it leads Philadelphia families. As we orient our system of schools completely to the needs of children and their families, we will focus on what is working here and replicate good ideas across the District, and what the evidence tells us works elsewhere. Students whose principals devote more of their time to the teaching in their buildings do better. Students whose teachers receive high-

quality professional development inside their classrooms do better. Students who are taught planning skills do better. Students whose teachers have been taught classroom management techniques do better. Students who attend schools that are safe, and who are not hungry, do better.

Secondly, we must not only do things that work, but do things well. Each Action described below rests on a plan for effective delivery, and a plan to “staff” that Action with people who care deeply about success and can overcome ambiguity and obstacles to get things done right. In other words, we prioritize excellence in execution in all things.

The history of education is littered with broken promises and fickle change. We routinely over-promise and under-deliver. However, time is no longer on our side. Districts must now succeed in an era of accountability, where the model of a publicly-funded monopoly has largely passed. In Philadelphia, this is coupled with an unprecedented financial crisis. It is therefore our firm intent and our commitment to do what is best for our students’ learning based on facts and evidence, and to focus on doing these things well.

#### **A NOTE ON TIMING, METRICS AND TARGETS**

This plan describes the current priority work of the District. While it is itself a “living document,” subject to change as new evidence emerges and specific Actions evolve, it is also quiet on the important issues of timing (by when? in what sequence?), metrics for all Actions (how will we measure the progress of our work?), and targets (to what specific outcomes do we aspire?). District leadership fully understands the importance of sequencing, measuring progress and setting targets, and will work hard over the coming weeks and months to ensure we are guided by ambitious, clear goals, with clear deliverables and accountabilities. This work will result in a public “dashboard” by which we will be held accountable. Simply put, as a next step, we will conduct further prioritization and develop timing, metrics and targets for all Actions contained within this plan.

## PART I: OUR TWO ANCHOR GOALS

Our “Anchor Goals” are two equally important guideposts for the District. Both require attention from every District employee and every external stakeholder. The School District of Philadelphia does not have the luxury to set its education agenda without regard for financial implications and sustainability, nor can it be successful if financial decisions are divorced from educational impact. This new era in management of the District means that every decision must be both educationally and fiscally sound.

### **ANCHOR GOAL 1: IMPROVE ACADEMIC OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS IN ALL THE SCHOOLS WE MANAGE AND IN THE CHARTER SCHOOLS WE AUTHORIZE**

The School District of Philadelphia is the eighth-largest public school district in the nation with 143,210 students in 242 District-run schools. Teachers, principals and assistant principals comprise about half of our 20,049 person workforce. The city is known for its avid support of public education, exceptional educators and dedicated staff who work every day in support of our students. The District is home to some of the best schools in the city and state.

However, much work remains to be done. Our reading and math performance lags behind most urban districts. There are persistent racial and economic achievement gaps, and our graduation rates are among the lowest in the state and nation. On average, only 57 percent of our students graduate from high school in four years, and less than two-thirds graduate within six years. Fewer than one in five Philadelphia students graduate, enroll in college and persist to the second year.

We believe that all children can and will be successful. We must work relentlessly to improve the academic outcomes for all students.

*How we will track our progress and hold ourselves accountable:*

#### ***The SDP On Track to College and Career Metrics***

Percent of students who achieve the following milestones:

- High School Graduation: A score of 1550 on the SAT (a score of at least 500 in each section) or a score of 21 on the ACT
- High School: A score of at least a 3 on an AP Exam or a score of at least a 4 on an IB Exam; scoring at least proficient on NOCTI assessments
- 9th Grade: Passing Geometry with a grade of “C” or better and passing English I with a grade of “B” or better
- 8th Grade: Passing Algebra I with a grade of “B” or better
- 3rd to 8th Grade: Scoring advanced on PSSA Reading and Math exams
- Kindergarten to 3rd Grade: Scoring proficient at the independent level of the Diagnostic Reading Assessment



*How we will track our progress and hold ourselves accountable (continued):*

**Graduation, Matriculation and Persistence Metrics**

Percent of students who:

- Graduate high school within four years
- Matriculate to college within one year of high school graduation
- Return to college for a second consecutive year after enrolling in college within one year of high school graduation

*Note I: Entrance into employment and the military are currently not possible to track; we plan on working towards this more comprehensive view of successful outcomes.*

*Note II: The SDP On Track to College and Career Metrics provide more accurate insight into our progress toward graduating students who are prepared for success in college and career. These metrics intentionally raise the bar on what we consider success. They were established after an intensive review of our student performance data. Specifically, we based our decision to set a 1550 SAT / 21 ACT as the college and career metric after carefully assessing the admission criteria for postsecondary institutions where the majority of our students attend<sup>2</sup>; the minimum SAT and ACT cut scores that our students would need to achieve to bypass remediation at the Community College of Philadelphia<sup>3</sup>; and national research indicating that students who attain a 1550 on the SAT have a 65% chance of earning a cumulative college GPA of a B- or better.<sup>4</sup> The remaining metrics were established through an analysis of the predictability of a range of academic indicators in relation to helping students achieve the 1550 SAT cut score. Once an initial set of indicators was established, analyses of the predictability of each indicator in relationship to the next sequential indicator were also conducted.<sup>5</sup>*

*Note III: The Graduation, Matriculation and Persistence Metrics are a part of a set of metrics developed by the Philadelphia Council for College and Career Success. These metrics were designed to track the city's progress towards meeting Mayor Nutter's educational goals.*

**ANCHOR GOAL 2: ENSURE THE FINANCIAL STABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY OF THE DISTRICT**

Faced with extremely challenging financial realities, it is imperative that we continue our progress toward ensuring the District's financial strength and sustainability. None of our efforts to improve student outcomes in the classroom and beyond will matter if we cannot get our financial house in order.

The District has recurring expenses that exceed its revenues by over \$250 million per year, amounting to a \$1.35 billion dollar deficit over the next five years. (It is important to note that the budget crisis can quickly become a cash crisis if the structural deficit is not addressed in time for the 2013-2014 budget.) This deficit was created by a confluence of factors — reduced state funding, a broken system of local tax assessment, charter-driven growth in the total public school population without new revenue, and failure to reduce spending commensurate with the reduction in revenue.

Though the District has made significant cuts to operating costs in recent years, our expenses are increasing due in part to structural personnel costs (such as those incurred from employee pensions and healthcare), and “stranded” overhead costs (the costs we must continue to cover even when students

move between schools or out of District-run schools). In order to remain true to our Anchor Goal on academic outcomes, above, we must ensure financial viability and sustainability by achieving the savings detailed in the Five Year Financial Plan, and make smarter decisions about how we use our resources.

*How we will track our progress and hold ourselves accountable:*

$$\frac{\$ \text{ revenue} - \$ \text{ expenditures}}{\$ \text{ expenditures}} \geq 0$$

## PART II: STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

### **Definition of a “Strategy”**

- A District priority around which District work is organized; collectively, the Strategies identify all of our priority work
- Strategies directly and significantly contribute to the achievement of the two Anchor Goals and associated metrics

### **Definition of an “Action”**

- An Action directly and significantly contributes to the achievement of a strategy
- Actions describe something specific and measurable, not just beliefs or general “good things”
- The case for the Actions can be made using evidence and data
- An Action is “big enough” to require an initiative owner to shepherd and shape its implementation
- An Action is important enough for the SDP senior leaders to actively engage on in a monthly or quarterly timeframe

### **STRATEGY 1: ACHIEVE AND SUSTAIN FINANCIAL BALANCE**

We will achieve and maintain balanced operating, capital and grants budgets, and enlist all District staff as responsible stewards of our public resources.

#### **Metric:**

*See Anchor Goal 2, above*

#### **Actions:**

- A. **Capture cost savings and track progress against the Five Year Financial Plan.** Implement cost-savings measures and reform our cost structure as outlined in the current Five Year Financial Plan.<sup>6</sup> Continually track progress against the Five Year Financial Plan and adhere to an annual, fully transparent, five-year planning process to ensure financial sustainability.

*Over the next five years, the SDP is facing a potential budget shortfall of over \$1 billion due to sharp drops in state and federal revenue and escalating internal costs. If we are to balance our revenues and expenses and create the confidence necessary to rebuild our revenue base, we must fully realize the fiscal discipline and operating efficiencies called for in the Five Year Financial Plan.*

- B. **Meet the immediate financial challenge of Fiscal Year 2014.** Implementation of cost saving measures is especially critical for FY2014. Therefore, we must implement strict financial controls, be strategic in our resource allocation process and continuously track progress to ensure fiscal stability in FY2014.

*Just to balance the FY 2014 budget and to have enough cash on hand to meet our obligations, the District will be required to reduce anywhere from \$250 million to \$300 million in expenses.*

- C. **Implement a data-driven budgeting process.** Implement an annual, transparent, data-driven budgeting process for operating and capital budgets that connects all spending to schools and classrooms.

*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.<sup>7</sup>*

- D. **Institute financial controls.** 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.

*With the limited financial controls currently in place, our organization is at tremendous risk for fiscal mismanagement and inefficiencies. We must ensure our principals and program managers, the day-to-day financial managers of our District, receive the training and support necessary to be effective, responsible financial stewards.*

- E. **Seek additional revenues.** Continuously seek additional resources from public and private sources to improve academic outcomes; capture value identified on revenue side of the Five Year Financial Plan.

*As a result of the end of stimulus funding, historically low levels of state education funding, and stagnating local tax revenues, revenues received by the District have significantly diminished. After over \$300 million in budget cuts in 2012, the School District is a “bare bones” operation. We must actively pursue additional recurring sources of revenue, including better collection efforts with the city, in support of our commitment to improve student academic outcomes.*

**Voices of Teachers and Principals:**

In the 2011-2012 District-Wide Principal Survey, 88% of principals identified “inadequate funds to fulfill the functions of the school” as a roadblock in accomplishing their goals. This was the most commonly cited obstacle, ranking far above other factors in the seriousness of its impact.

- F. **Effectively manage grants.** Ensure effective and compliant management of grants through active training and compliance management.

*Around 18% of our FY2013 operating budget comes from grants including federal dollars allocated through Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Remaining compliant with grant*

*regulations, regardless of their source or size, is necessary to ensure we continue to receive these critical funds and retain maximum flexibility in their use.*

## STRATEGY 2: IMPROVE STUDENT OUTCOMES

We will ensure that all of our students achieve their maximum potential in the classroom and beyond by employing evidence-based, tailored interventions in support of their academic, social-emotional, and physical well-being.

### **Metrics:**

*See Anchor Goal 1, above*

- A. **Utilize data to assess student needs.** Thoroughly understand student needs through ongoing data analysis and segmentation in order to explicitly avoid a “one size fits all” approach and provide analytical insight to inform strategy, intervention design, and implementation.

*We can be much more sophisticated about understanding, based on data, how we can best meet the needs of our 143,000 students in the classroom and within schools.*

- B. **Sustain high academic standards and expectations.** Sustain high learning expectations for all students and enhance the consistency and rigor of classroom instruction by fully implementing the Pennsylvania Common Core Standards.

*Rigorous standards aligned with the demands of college and careers are the foundation of a high-quality education. Implementing the Common Core Standards<sup>8</sup> is one important step in ensuring that our students graduate with the knowledge and skills critical for success.*

### **Voices of Teachers and Principals:**

In the 2011-2012 District-Wide Teacher Survey, 64% of teachers identified “instructional strategies guided by PA Common Core Standards” as a professional development need.

- C. **Advance the implementation of Response to Instruction and Intervention.** Advance the District-wide implementation of Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtII) in order to create dynamic classrooms and schools equipped to address the academic and non-academic needs of individual students based on data.

*RtII, a Pennsylvania Department of Education initiative<sup>9</sup>, provides our educators with the roadmap and structure to ensure effective, proactive application of holistic student supports. RtII’s tiered early intervention approach drives improved academic performance, especially in reading,<sup>10</sup> and the most significant gains are achieved when academic and behavioral interventions are integrated.<sup>11</sup>*

**Voices of Teachers and Principals:**

*“If we are truly committing to RtII, we need more research-based interventions to offer our students. Right now our school only has Corrective Reading and Math, and Lexia.”*

–K-8 Counselor

- D. **Prioritize early literacy.** Equip our young learners with the skills and experiences they need to begin and stay on track in school by enhancing and implementing a District-wide Comprehensive Literacy Framework and working with our partners to increase the number of high quality pre-K seats across the city.

*The return on investment achieved by prioritizing early childhood education is indisputable. Children who participate in high quality early childhood education programs are significantly less likely to be placed in Special Education, drop out of school, become teen parents, or commit a violent crime.<sup>12</sup> Students who read on or above grade level by the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade are significantly more likely to graduate high school and enroll in college.<sup>13</sup> While the SDP already serves approximately 8,000 early childhood students, there are thousands of additional students currently on waitlists.*

- E. **Cultivate academic tenacity.** Actively cultivate students’ academic tenacity by integrating the language and skills of resilience, perseverance, self-control, and problem-solving into schools’ curriculum and culture.

*When we asked them, 84% of our seniors indicated that they intend to enroll in college. However, only 45% of students who expressed an intention to enroll in college actually did so.<sup>14</sup> Students can be taught techniques<sup>15</sup> to strengthen their academic tenacity, defined as the “mindsets and skills that allow students to look beyond short-term concerns to longer-term or higher-order goals and to withstand challenges and setbacks to persevere toward these goals”.<sup>16</sup> These “non-cognitive” skills are more reliable than traditional academic indicators in predicting whether students will graduate, their final Grade Point Average, and their income levels, savings behavior, and mental and physical health as adults.<sup>17</sup>*

- F. **Clarify the profiles of college and career ready graduates.** Revise the graduation and promotion policy and the desired “profiles” of our graduates to better describe the requirements of today’s college and workplace experiences; work with external partners and stakeholders from higher education and the business community. Standardize and align high school course catalogues to support the revised profile.

*The SDP graduation and promotion policy needs to be updated to fully reflect the current demands of college and career. Furthermore, with the implementation of Keystone exams, it is more important than ever that all schools conform to the course catalogue guidelines issued by the District. By updating our graduation policy and standardizing*

*course catalogues across our high schools, students, families, and District leadership will have a clear, consistent understanding of the expectations for and path to graduation.*

- G. Track students' progress to graduation, college and career.** Ensure students stay on track to graduation by assessing, aligning and improving the functionality and use of early warning systems currently employed in the District; institute a set of indicators for college- and career-readiness to actively track students' progression toward success in college and career; identify and match specific interventions to early warnings; use early warnings and interventions to reduce the dropout rate for all segments of our student population.

*We know that we cannot wait until high school to help students get and stay on track to graduation and college and career readiness. Effective use of early warning systems has been proven to improve academic performance, attendance, and behavior of students—and increase the odds that our students graduate on time and prepared for success.<sup>18</sup>*

- H. Develop a high school improvement strategy.** Develop a District-wide high school improvement strategy through proven academic interventions in support of the diverse needs and interests of our secondary students; improve the quality and reach of dual enrollment programs, Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate and credit recovery programs.

*Half of the students in the district fall off track to graduate at some point in high school. Many of these students begin to struggle as early as ninth grade.<sup>19</sup> In the 2009-2010 school year, fewer than 4,000 high school students enrolled in AP courses. Of those who enrolled in an AP course and took an AP exam, only 22% scored a 3 or better on at least one exam.<sup>20</sup>*

- I. Increase access to Career and Technical Education.** Increase access to relevant and high-quality Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs and Career Academies, and ensure consistent academic and post-graduation outcomes.

*For the 2010-2011 school year, 82% of students who participated in CTE programs graduated within four years and more than 80% of students reported participation in college, work, or military following graduation.<sup>21</sup> Continued investment in CTE programs that reflect Philadelphia's high-priority, growing occupations in partnership with the business community support the Mayor's initiatives in these areas, and will improve academic outcomes for participating students.*

- J. Meet the needs of students in Special Education.** Provide excellent instruction and effectively meet the needs of our students with disabilities by aligning our organization, systems, policies, and investments with this commitment.

*Currently, 14.2% of District students are enrolled in special education programs (non-gifted). Students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) perform below their regular education peers. In 2012, 19.1% of students with IEPs were at least proficient in reading*

*on the PSSA compared with 49.8% of students without an IEP. Among first-time 9th graders with IEPs in 2008-09, 48% graduated from high school (District or charter) within four years, compared with 67% of students without IEPs.*

**Voices of Teachers and Principals:**

In the 2011-2012 District-Wide Teacher Survey, 63% of teachers identified “differentiated instruction on the continuum of special education students” as a professional development need.

- K. Meet the needs of English Language Learners.** Provide excellent instruction and effectively meet the needs of our English Language Learners by aligning our organization, systems, policies, and investments with this commitment.

*Currently, 7.8% of District students participate in Limited English Proficiency (LEP) programming. LEP students perform below their regular education peers. In 2012, 16.1% of LEP students were at least proficient in reading (compared with 46.6% for non-LEP students). Sixty-one percent of LEP students who were first-time 9th graders in 2008-09 graduated from high school within four years (compared with 64% of non-LEP students). Currently, the District has four Transitional Spanish Bilingual Programs and only one Dual Language Spanish Bilingual Program.*

**Voices of Teachers and Principals:**

In the 2011-2012 District-Wide Teacher Survey, over one-third of teachers felt they were “not prepared at all” or only “somewhat well prepared” to address the needs of students with limited English proficiency and 56% of teachers identified “differentiated instruction for English Language Learners” as a professional development need.

- L. Improve alternative education.** Work to improve the quality of alternative education provisions, recognizing that high school students who are “over-age and under-credited” have specific needs.

*We currently educate 4,080 students across 23 alternative education programs throughout the city, 12 of which are managed by external providers. Thirty percent of the first-time 9th grade students enrolled in alternative education programs in 2008-09 graduated from high school (District or charter) within four years; of the 2,490 12th graders in alternative education programs in 2011-12, 68% graduated that year.*

- M. Review outside educational institutions.** Continue the program and financial review, begun in May 2012 in partnership with city agencies, of educational programs for Philadelphia students placed by the District, the courts, the Department of Human Services, and the Department of Behavioral Health at state-run schools, residential treatment facilities, and other institutional settings.



*More than 5,000 students from the SDP attend outside education institutions, at a cost to the District of \$64 million. At the same time, the District has limited visibility into program and learning outcomes.*

- N. **Improve student nutrition.** Continually improve student nutrition, student participation in meals, and customer satisfaction by transitioning schools, where possible, to full-service meals and actively engaging students in making healthy dietary decisions.

*Improved nutrition and participation in meals – especially breakfast – have been associated with increased academic performance, improved attendance, and decreased tardiness among school-age children.<sup>22</sup> Already, we have promising evidence of declining obesity rates among Philadelphia students,<sup>23</sup> and we will continue to actively invest in our students’ health through high quality school meals.*

### STRATEGY 3: DEVELOP A SYSTEM OF EXCELLENT SCHOOLS

We will strengthen our system of schools so that all students have access to equitable, excellent and safe schools, valued by the public.

**Metrics:**

- Percent (%) utilization
- Percent (%) high performing schools

**Actions:**

- A. **Improve school safety and climate.** Reduce violent incidents, enhance climates for learning, and establish a culture of acceptance and respect in all schools by strategically implementing and sustaining evidence-based school-wide climate and culture programs, and training school administrators on creating safe and constructive climates.

*Safety is a prerequisite for learning, but we have yet to ensure all students feel safe and welcome everyday in every school. In addition, concerns about safety can cause families to leave district schools.<sup>24</sup> In the 2011-2012 school year, there were 4,059 violent incidents in District schools and over 45,518 in-school and out-of-school student suspensions (involving a total of 22,591 students). Fortunately, we know that when holistic climate and culture programs are embraced by an entire school community and sustained year after year, these challenges can be overcome. The significant drop in violence and suspensions at West Philadelphia High School following implementation of restorative practices in 2008 is one compelling example of the impact of this type of approach.<sup>25</sup>*

**Voices of Teachers and Principals:**

Nearly a quarter of teachers reported in the 2011-2012 District-Wide Teacher Survey that their school did not have “a system for positive reinforcement of appropriate behavior”. The same proportion of teachers reported that their school lacked “a systemic, structured approach to managing transitions” such as lunch and dismissal.

- B. **Implement the Facilities Master Plan.** Adjust the District’s school footprint and successfully open the 2013-2014 school year with a reconfigured set of schools to ensure that the resources and opportunities we have are directed at actual students rather than empty seats and rooms, and are more equitably distributed.

*The District currently maintains a building utilization of 67% across all its schools, wasting resources that can be reallocated across a more appropriately-sized and configured system. Students attending schools of similar size with higher utilization levels tend to have more academic and extracurricular options.<sup>26</sup>*

- C. **Enhance the physical environments of schools.** Ensure the physical environment of every school is safe and welcoming for students, staff, parents, families, and community members.

*The quality and comfort of school buildings has been linked to improved student achievement, reduced vandalism, absenteeism and disciplinary incidents, and higher teacher retention and satisfaction.<sup>27</sup>*

**Voices of Teachers and Principals:**

*“Make schools a place where people WANT to go. Where do you work? Is it somewhere bright, clean and cheerful? Why shouldn't schools be the same?”*

—Elementary School Teacher

- D. **Clarify school autonomy.** More clearly define autonomy levels for schools, along with clarifying what decisions will be made consistent across the District, and ensure schools receive appropriate, differentiated support, guidance and oversight.

*The current system of three-tiered autonomy, implemented during the 2012-2013 school year, is still evolving to develop meaningful distinctions between schools in the most and least autonomous tiers.*

- E. **Develop innovative school models.** Adjust our school models and classroom structures to reflect the needs of our students by expanding and replicating high-performing schools and programs, investing in new models, and encouraging flexibility and innovation in educational delivery; start immediately by piloting blended learning approaches, continuing our proficiency-based promotion pilot, and launching a virtual school.

*Within Philadelphia and across the nation and world, divergent models of schools have shown tremendous success. Different schedules, thematic focuses, school day and*

*school year lengths, uses of technology, staffing configurations and other innovative approaches have proven effective.*

**Voices of Teachers and Principals:**

The most commonly cited professional development need among teachers according to the 2011-2012 District-Wide Teacher Survey was “integrating technology effectively into instruction”, with 69% of teachers requesting support in this area.

- F. **Turn around low performing schools.** Through the Renaissance Schools Initiative and other proven interventions, turn around our lowest-performing schools that have failed to make and sustain significant improvements in student academic performance, attendance, and school climate.

*At both District-managed Promise Academies and charter-managed Renaissance charter schools, improvements have been noted in student behavior. A majority of schools have seen a reduction in out-of-school suspensions and serious incidents. For many schools, academic performance and attendance rates have increased.*

- G. **Become a top-quality charter school authorizer.** Become a top-quality authorizer of high-performing charter schools. Improve the transparency and consistency of our work with the Charter sector in Philadelphia. Strategically manage charter growth and performance in support of dramatically improving student outcomes, and ensuring the District’s financial stability.<sup>28</sup>

*The 84 charter schools in operation in Philadelphia enroll approximately 54,000 students. The proportion of students enrolled at charters has expanded by over 40,000 seats since the 2003-2004 school year. While there are many examples of charters driving transformational change, charter school performance, like that of District schools, is variable. In 2012, the percentage of charter school students scoring basic or below basic in reading on the PSSA was 44% (excluding the new Renaissance Charter schools).*

- H. **Collaborate with other school operators.** Actively collaborate with all Philadelphia school operators, through the Great Schools Compact and other relevant venues, to provide the best possible experience for Philadelphia families, share successful practice, and benefit from shared operational economies of scale.

*It is important to provide families with smooth transition experiences. In addition, we continue to seek out the best ideas from all quarters to improve the schools we manage.*

- I. **Develop a school performance measure.** Develop and implement a new measure of school performance in order to hold all District and charter schools to the same high standards of performance, equity and safety.

*We require a new school performance measure to align with the priorities detailed in this Action Plan.*

**STRATEGY 4: IDENTIFY AND DEVELOP COMMITTED, CAPABLE PEOPLE**

We will fill all parts of our organization with high-performing talent who are committed to and capable of delivering on our goals to dramatically improve student outcomes and ensure financial sustainability.

**Metric:**

Percent (%) of high performing employees

**Actions:**

- A. **Enhance teacher recruitment and hiring practices.** Sustain a diverse pipeline of teacher talent and adjust our hiring timing and practices to select candidates with the skills and mindsets to ensure our students excel.

*In a typical school year, the SDP hires around 1,000 new teachers. Since 2010, the SDP has gone from hiring nearly 40% of its new teachers after August to hiring 100% of its new teachers before September, avoiding the detrimental effects of late-hires on schools and students.<sup>29</sup> We need to build on this success. Continuing to reform our teacher recruitment and selection processes represents an incredible opportunity to best prepare our new educators to drive student achievement and success.*

- B. **Implement teacher, principal, and specialist evaluations.** Implement systems and tools, aligned with the Pennsylvania Department of Education’s Educator Effectiveness Project, to effectively evaluate teacher, principal, and specialist performance and use those evaluations to provide useful feedback and improve practice.

*The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) Educator Effectiveness Project<sup>30</sup> is currently piloting new educator performance evaluation systems, which will be implemented statewide for school-based professionals. Quality classroom-observation-based evaluations have been linked to improved teacher performance both during the evaluation period and in subsequent years, even for experienced teachers.<sup>31</sup> Well-structured principal evaluations that provide timely, actionable feedback and District oversight of schools can strengthen leadership practices and have meaningful impact on student achievement.<sup>32</sup>*

- C. **Strengthen teacher development and retention.** As part of our ongoing work with teachers to strengthen the teaching profession in Philadelphia, focus professional development in the classroom and on practices proven to improve student outcomes, and provide differentiated roles for teachers; we will also identify methods for retaining our best teachers.

*Countless studies prove that “the most effective form of professional development is that which is based in schools and is related to the daily activities of teachers and learners”.<sup>33</sup>*

*In addition, it is of tremendous benefit to districts to retain our highest performing teachers.<sup>34</sup>*

**Voices of Teachers and Principals**

Of the nearly 300 school-based staff who provided input to this Action Plan, more than half (54%) cited relevant, high-quality, school-based professional development as a critical lever for improving student outcomes.

In the 2011-2012 District-Wide Principal Survey, 70% of principals identified “lack of time for teacher planning and professional development” as a roadblock to achieving their goals.

- D. Create meaningful opportunities for teacher collaboration.** Create meaningful opportunities for teachers to collaborate and grow as professionals in formal and informal groups, cohorts, and networks both within and between schools.

*A recent study of New York City public school teachers found that “social capital” among teachers—defined as the quality and frequency of interaction and collaboration—“was a significant predictor of student achievement gains above and beyond teacher experience or ability in the classroom”.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, some of our top schools, such as Science Leadership Academy, have cultivated dynamic teacher communities by reserving time for common planning and encouraging teacher collaboration and leadership.*

**Voices of Teachers and Principals:**

*“COMMON PLANNING TIME! It was a brilliant idea with failed implementations a few years ago. Some schools used it for double prep and never had a meeting... some schools had teachers meet with ZERO kids in common. As a roster chair, you have to schedule smarter to get teachers together that have the same cohort of students in the same room at the same time.”*

–High School Teacher and Roster Chair

- E. Provide effective principal support.** Ensure principals get differentiated support by building a highly effective cadre of principal supervisors.

*When principals are given the support, feedback, and resources to be effective, teacher performance, student achievement, and school quality improve.<sup>36</sup> With only eight assistant superintendents, each of whom is tasked with supporting between 30 and 40 schools, we are not currently able to provide principals the support and oversight they need to be most successful.*

- F. Increase capacity of principals and leadership teams.** Ensure that all school leaders are positioned to significantly raise the quality of instruction through effective and efficient use of their time and teams by identifying and replicating successful leadership models.

*It is critical that every school has a common vision of effective teaching, clear expectations for instruction, and a shared commitment to improving instructional practice, which correlates with greater retention of successful teachers and higher*

*student achievement.<sup>37</sup> As evident in effective schools across the country and emerging research, this means instructional leaders must prioritize and spend the majority of their time on improving teaching and learning.<sup>38</sup> Our current budgetary constraints require that we identify ways of increasing the capacity of school leadership teams in financially sustainable ways.*

**Voices of Teachers and Principals**

*“Principals need to be able to fulfill their primary function in the school, which is to serve as the instructional leader of the building. With the myriad of responsibilities placed on principals, many are unable to have a daily presence in their classrooms.”*

–Middle School Teacher

*“Allow principals to focus on what matters most—students and their achievement.”*

–Elementary School Principal

- G. Strengthen the principal pipeline.** Cultivate a strong pipeline of school leaders by investing in leadership pathways proven to produce highly effective school leaders and actively grooming new leaders from our cadre of high-performing educators.

*School leadership ranks second only to teacher quality in its impact on student achievement.<sup>39</sup> According to over 10 years of research by the Wallace Foundation, building a strong pipeline of school leaders requires that districts clearly detail the rigorous requirements for school leadership positions, provide high-quality training for aspiring leaders, engage in selective hiring, and offer solid on-the-job support and performance evaluations.<sup>40</sup> In particular, we believe our best school leaders will emerge from highly effective classroom teachers currently in the District.*

- H. Clearly define administrative staff role descriptions and performance evaluations.** Ensure all central office and school-based support staff have clearly defined job descriptions and performance evaluations.

*The SDP central office provides support critical to the success of our schools. Leadership turnover in recent years has led to confusion in roles and expectations that inhibit our team's success. Clarity of roles and accountability serves as the bedrock for developing a high-performing central office team that continuously improves the services offered to principals, teachers, support staff, parents, students and the community. As part of this, we will reinstate the performance management system for central office staff that has lapsed in the current year.*

- I. Launch the Transformation Corps.** Launch the Philadelphia Schools Transformation Corps to provide professional growth opportunities for high-performing district staff to work on our most important priorities, and supplement that staff with exceptional external talent.

*Experts on effective change from Kotter to Keller highlight the importance of developing change leaders and building capabilities during transformations to support institutionalized and sustained change.<sup>41</sup> Additionally, the Transformation Corps provides another avenue to make Philadelphia a leader in developing and retaining the finest talent – a strategy widely acknowledged as foundational to organizational success.*

## STRATEGY 5: BECOME A PARENT AND FAMILY-CENTERED ORGANIZATION

We will listen to and respect parents and families as our partners and our “customers.”

### **Metric:**

Performance on annual family satisfaction surveys

### **Actions:**

- A. **Improve customer service.** Review and refine all core parent/family-facing processes, including student enrollment, to identify opportunities for improvement and ensure a customer service orientation.

*We work on behalf of the public, for the public. We currently have no way of measuring parent/family satisfaction with the quality of educational provision, apart from the dramatic shift of students into charter schools. Anecdotally, we are told that there is wide variation of parent/family experiences across schools and with central administration.*

#### **Voices of Teachers and Principals**

*“Parents should not have to work through a tangled system to make sure they are getting all they can out of the school system.”*

–Elementary School Teacher

- B. **Launch additional, effective School Advisory Councils.** Launch an effective School Advisory Council (SAC) in every District school, drawing on lessons learned from existing Councils.

*We currently have functioning SACs in 39 schools, with positive reviews from participants, and the Mayor has expressed public support of this initiative.*

- C. **Establish clear processes for parent/family input.** Establish, publicize, and monitor for quality clear, consistent avenues for parents/families to express and resolve concerns.

*The literature from organizational behavior is unequivocal: responsive organizations perform better.*

- D. **Support the unique needs of parents.** Support the unique needs of parents of students with special requirements, including students with disabilities, English Language Learners, and students in early childhood programs.

*For those areas requiring more sophisticated engagement with parents/families, we need to provide more focus and attention.*

- E. **Empower parents with information.** Empower parents and families with information, insight, and ideas on how to support students in their learning and how to hold schools and the District accountable for the delivery of high-quality educational opportunities.

*Parents and families are an incredible source of support for students; a number of innovative practices around the country have illustrated the powerful impact of parents and teachers collaborating on student learning. In addition, parents and families throughout Philadelphia and elsewhere have demonstrated an ability to advocate for and support better outcomes for their children.*

## STRATEGY 6: BECOME AN ALIGNED, ACCOUNTABLE ORGANIZATION

We will align our full organization – from our infrastructure to the mindset of each employee – to our Goals and hold ourselves accountable for delivering on our commitments to the students of Philadelphia.

**Metric:**

Performance against metrics for Strategies 1-5

**Actions:**

- A. **Institute a comprehensive change management program.** Institute a comprehensive change management program to ensure all employees and stakeholders understand their role in and contribution to the transformation of the SDP; orient entire organization to service of schools and families.

*After years of tumult, including a shake-up of public confidence in the school system and layoffs, it is crucial to align the entire organization to a common vision and our two anchor Goals.*

- B. **Institute organization-wide performance management processes.** Develop organization-wide performance management processes.

*We do not currently have systems to understand individual contributions throughout the organization to success in classrooms.*



- C. **Improve data accuracy and application.** Increase the accuracy and application of data used for decision-making in classrooms, schools and central administration.

*Currently, many management decisions are made in the absence of data. Strong organizations understand their goals and track progress in order to justify decisions and make necessary course corrections. At the school-level, effective and timely data can help drive instructional and curricular changes, student interventions, and resource-allocation decisions.*

- D. **Implement effective, aligned business processes.** Ensure business processes are effective, aligned with our strategic direction and standardized across the SDP.

*In order to effectively execute the District's key Anchor Goals and strategies, the District must take the initiative to realign its businesses practices to reflect a more efficient working environment. This includes reducing reliance on undocumented institutional knowledge and fully automating our processes, thereby creating further transparency and coordination among all departments. This effort should be done in direct connection with the investment into our core systems.*

- E. **Invest in core systems.** Invest in core systems necessary to deliver on our strategic goals, including Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) and a Student Information Systems (SIS).

*The District is currently supporting legacy ERP and SIS systems that have been in place for 13 and 25 years, respectively. In order to meet the growing need to use data to drive accountability in both financial practice and instructional change, the District must position itself to modernize its core systems.*

- F. **Ensure testing integrity.** Ensure there are no testing irregularities through enhanced training, continuing newly developed testing protocols, taking appropriate and swift action in response to violations, and aligning system incentives more appropriately.

*In late 2011, the PDE identified 57 schools with potential testing anomalies in Philadelphia County, which included 53 District schools and four charter schools. Consequently, the District researched best practices in order to implement a rigorous testing administration plan district-wide, which included the quarantine and embargo of testing materials, daily and random test monitoring by administrators, mandatory professional development of all testing coordinators, and other testing protocols required by the PDE. Following these new procedures, the School District's 2012 overall PSSA proficiency in math saw a decline of 8.7 percentage points (from 57.8% to 49.1% advanced/proficient). In reading, scores dropped 7.1 percentage points (from 51.6% to 44.5% advanced/proficient). A portion of this decline is certainly attributable to a more secure testing environment. As a result, the District will continue to review and enhance all testing administration processes and procedures for the 2013 PSSA testing period. In*

*addition, the District's Office of General Counsel will handle all investigations of possible testing integrity and testing administration violations.*

- G. **Cultivate and sustain partnerships.** Cultivate and sustain partnerships with the broader community by establishing an Office of Strategic Partnerships.

*The city of Philadelphia is replete with generous people who are passionate about improving the quality of schools, and who have continuously supported public schools. In an age of fiscal austerity, it is even more important to take full advantage of and align the resources made available from philanthropists, businesses, non-profits, higher education, and elsewhere.*

- H. **Update the organization structure.** Create a revised organizational structure to better meet the requirements of this plan, including the creation of a Strategy Delivery Unit to ensure organizational focus on evidence and on our core priorities.

*It is important to have the leanest organization structure possible that still meets the demands of this Plan.*

## PART III: THE ACTION PLAN AS A FIRST STEP

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. This is a living document, and will not remain static. In the language of information technology, it is version 1.0. That said, there is a clear path forward.

Our specific next steps are:

1. **Begin implementation.** We will define timing, metrics and targets, identify owners, and develop implementation plans for all Actions included in the Plan.
2. **Set up systems and routines to drive progress.** There will be weekly reviews of progress toward our targets. As a leadership team, we will engage in solution-oriented, data-driven problem solving sessions in support of the realization of our commitments and to resolve implementation challenges.
3. **Reorient the central administration.** The organization will be reoriented to conform to the above priorities. Form follows function, and we will ensure that we have the organizational structure we need to deliver results most effectively and efficiently. (See Action 6H, above.)
4. **Drive the FY 2014 budgeting process.** This Action Plan will serve as a major input into the District budgeting process, starting now. All central office departments and schools will be asked to align their work and budgets to the priorities set forth in the Action Plan.
5. **Refine through stakeholder input.** Use input from staff and stakeholders gathered through avenues described below to refine and further evolve the Plan.

How will our staff and stakeholders engage in this process of renewal?

- **Principals** will be invited to utilize their Principal Learning Teams (PLTs) as a forum for discussion of and input into this plan. In addition, a principal advisory board will be reinstated to provide an avenue for school-level input into District policy and practices, and we will convene school leaders in focus groups annually. We will use the annual District-Wide Principal Survey to refine our understanding of principals' needs and opinions.
- **Teachers and other school-based professionals** will be invited to participate via virtual meetings, and engage in building-level discussions and focus groups. We will use the annual District-Wide Teacher Survey to refine our understanding of teachers' needs and opinions.
- **Parents and families** will be engaged through the Actions identified above in Strategy 5.
- **Students** will be invited to participate in "youth-friendly spaces" that will encourage their participation and engagement, such as the District-wide student government initiative and existing youth organizations.
- **Central administrative staff** will engage in semiannual "town halls" and have ongoing opportunities to share input within teams.

- **External partners** will be directly engaged through our new Office of Strategic Partnerships. We will continue to seek input from the broader community in meetings throughout the coming months.

## EXHIBIT 1: INPUTS TO THE ACTION PLAN

We actively sought ideas and guidance from our employees, parents and families, and the broader community. Specifically the Action Plan reflects input from the following sources:

- “Invitation for Input on District-wide Strategic Priorities” December 2012 survey through which 295 school-based staff provided input
- 2011-2012 District-Wide Public School Principal Survey
- 2011-2012 District-Wide Public School Teacher Survey
- Interviews with more than 20 leadership team members from central administration
- Focus groups and parent conversations during over 50 school visits and meetings conducted by Dr. Hite from September through December 2012
- Community meetings and interviews with over 35 groups across Philadelphia

In addition, we have collected many existing strategic documents and reports from which we have borrowed ideas and gleaned lessons learned. Specifically, the Action Plan was developed after consulting the following documents:

- The School District of Philadelphia Chief Academic Office Academic Priorities 2012-2013
- Meeting Milestones: The Third Annual Report to Mayor Nutter From the Philadelphia Council for College and Career Success
- The School District of Philadelphia Career and Technical Education Five Year Strategic Plan, September 2012 – June 2017
- A Blueprint for Action: Blue Ribbon Commission on Safe Schools, January 2012
- The Philadelphia Great Schools Compact, December 20, 2011
- College Board, Advanced Placement Data, 2009-2010
- Analysis and Findings of the SDP College-Going Working Group
- Forthcoming report from the Harvard Strategic Data Project, College-Going Policy Brief
- Ongoing work of the SDP Early Literacy Working Group
- Embracing the Challenge: A Five Year Blueprint For Increasing Achievement in Secondary Grades in The School District Of Philadelphia, 2008 – 2013
- The African American and Latino Male Dropout Taskforce Report, September 2, 2010
- Harvard University Strategic Data Project Human Capital Analyses, June 2012 and findings of the SDP Human Capital Working Group
- The Office of Charter Schools Strategic Plan Draft
- Strategic Planning for the School District of Philadelphia: Lessons Learned from Improved Districts, December 2012
- Imagine 2014: The School District of Philadelphia Strategic Plan and associated progress updates
- Financial Systems and Operations Working Group Report, July 2011
- Boston Consulting Group’s “Transforming Philadelphia’s Public Schools” Report
- The Five Year Financial Plan, Fiscal Years 2013-2017
- Convectus Solutions, April 2011 Report

- A Blueprint for Transforming Philadelphia' Public Schools: Safe, high-quality schools. Fiscal Sustainability.
- School District of Philadelphia, 2010-2011 High School Exit Survey

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Philadelphia Magazine (October 2012).

<sup>2</sup> For a listing of the top 15 institutions that our students attend, see: OMG Center, “Pathways to Postsecondary Completion: Technical Appendix,” October 2011,  
<[http://www.omgcenter.org/sites/default/files/PtC\\_Technical\\_Appendix.pdf](http://www.omgcenter.org/sites/default/files/PtC_Technical_Appendix.pdf)>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ccp.edu/site/prospective/assessment/faq.php>

<sup>4</sup> The College Board, “Research Report 2011-5: SAT Benchmarks – Development of College Readiness Benchmark and Its Relationship to Secondary and Postsecondary School Performance.”  
<<http://research.collegeboard.org/sites/default/files/publications/2012/7/researchreport-2011-5-sat-college-readiness-benchmark-secondary-performance.pdf>>

<sup>5</sup> In addition to being a set of metrics that gives our students the greatest probability for being ready for college and career, many of these metrics are also being tracked by the Pennsylvania Department of Education as part of its school profiles.

<sup>6</sup> *The Five Year Financial Plan, Fiscal Years 2013-2017, Adopted by the School Reform Commission on September 10, 2012.* Retrieved from <http://webgui.phila.k12.pa.us/uploads/25/uf/25ufD1ggRSTPPj3EYkXNaw/SDPFYP.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Hartman, W. T. (2003). *School District Budgeting*. Lanham, MD, 20706: ScarecrowEducation.

<sup>8</sup> Common Core standards define the knowledge and skills students should have within their K-12 education careers so that they will graduate high school able to succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing academic college courses and in workforce training programs. The standards are generally:

- Aligned with college and work expectations;
- Clear, understandable and consistent;
- Evidence-based;
- Informed by other top performing countries, so that all students are prepared to succeed in our global economy and society; and

<http://www.corestandards.org/about-the-standards>

<sup>9</sup> *Pennsylvania Department of Education Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtII): An Introduction.*

Retrieved from <http://pattan.net-website.s3.amazonaws.com/files/materials/publications/docs/RtIIAnIntro.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Hughes, C. & Dexter, D. *RTI Action Network Field Studies of RTI Programs, Revised.* Retrieved from <http://www.rtinetwork.org/learn/research/field-studies-rti-programs>.

<sup>11</sup> Bohanon, H., Goodman, S. & McIntosh, K. *RTI Action Network Integrating Academic and Behavior Supports Within an RtI Framework, Part 1: General Overview.* Retrieved from

<http://www.rtinetwork.org/learn/behavior-supports/integrating-behavior-and-academic-supports-general-overview>.

<sup>12</sup> According to the Ounce of Prevention Fund, at-risk children who don't receive a high-quality early childhood education are:

- 25% more likely to drop out of school
- 40% more likely to become a teen parent
- 50% more likely to be placed in special education
- 60% more likely to never attend college
- 70% more likely to be arrested for a violent crime

<http://www.ounceofprevention.org/about/why-early-childhood-investments-work.php>

See also the September 2012 report by Fight Crime: Invest in Kids entitled “High-Quality Early Care and Education: A Key To Reducing Future Crime in Pennsylvania”

<sup>13</sup> Lesnick, J. Goerge, R.M., Smithgall, C. & Gwynne, J. (2010). *Reading on Grade Level in Third Grade: How Is It Related to High School Performance and College Enrollment?* Chicago: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago. Retrieved from [http://www.chapinhall.org/sites/default/files/Reading\\_on\\_Grade\\_Level\\_111710.pdf](http://www.chapinhall.org/sites/default/files/Reading_on_Grade_Level_111710.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> 2010-2011 High School Exit Survey and National Student Clearinghouse. Analyses will be published in the forthcoming Strategic Data Project College Going Brief.

<sup>15</sup> Duckworth, A. L., Grant, H., Loew, B., Oettingen, G. & Gollwitzer, P. M. (2011). Self-regulation strategies improve self-discipline in adolescents: Benefits of mental contrasting and implementation intentions. *Educational Psychology: An International Journal of Experimental Educational Psychology*, 31(1), 17-26.

Retrieved from

[http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~duckwort/images/publications/DuckworthGrantLoewOettingenGollwitzer\\_2011\\_Self-regulationStrategiesImproveSelf-DisciplineinAdolescents.pdf](http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~duckwort/images/publications/DuckworthGrantLoewOettingenGollwitzer_2011_Self-regulationStrategiesImproveSelf-DisciplineinAdolescents.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> Dweck, C. S., Walton, G. M., Cohen, G. L., Paunesku, D., & Yeager, D. (2011). *Academic tenacity: Mindsets and skills that promote long-term learning*. Paper prepared for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Stanford University.

<sup>17</sup> Duckworth, A. L. (2011). The significance of self-control. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 108(7), 2639-40. Retrieved from

[http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~duckwort/images/publications/Duckworth\\_2011\\_TheSignificanceofSelf-Control.pdf](http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~duckwort/images/publications/Duckworth_2011_TheSignificanceofSelf-Control.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> In 2005, the Philadelphia Education Fund embarked on a body of research with Johns Hopkins University to study dropout trends in Philadelphia. The research revealed that struggling middle grades students send powerful distress signals as early as sixth grade. The study isolated four Early Warning Indicators: attending school less than 80% of the time; a failing grade in math; a failing grade in English; and a poor behavioral grade.



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Middle grades students who exhibit any one of the Early Warning Indicators have between a 10% and 20% chance of high school graduation. <http://www.philaedfund.org/about-us/partnerships>

<sup>19</sup> Forthcoming report from the Harvard Strategic Data Project, College-Going Policy Brief

<sup>20</sup> 2009-2010 AP Data from the College Board; analyses conducted by SDP Office of Accountability

<sup>21</sup> Pennsylvania Department of Education Academic Achievement Reports; PDE Perkins Performance Indicators

<sup>22</sup> Taras, H. (2005). Nutrition and Student Performance at School. *Journal of School Health*, 75(6), 199-213.

<sup>23</sup> Tavernise, S. (2012). Obesity in Young Is Seen as Falling in Several Cities. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/11/health/childhood-obesity-drops-in-new-york-and-philadelphia.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/11/health/childhood-obesity-drops-in-new-york-and-philadelphia.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0)

<sup>24</sup> The Pew Charitable Trust. (2010). *Philadelphia's Changing Schools and What Parents Want from Them*. Retrieved from [http://www.pewtrusts.org/uploadedFiles/wwwpewtrustsorg/Reports/Philadelphia\\_Research\\_Initiative/PRI\\_education\\_report.pdf](http://www.pewtrusts.org/uploadedFiles/wwwpewtrustsorg/Reports/Philadelphia_Research_Initiative/PRI_education_report.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> Improving School Climate: Findings from Schools Implementing Restorative Practices, A Report from the International Institute of Restorative Practices Graduate School. (2009). Retrieved from <http://www.iirp.edu/pdf/IIRP-Improving-School-Climate.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> Review of SY2012-2013 course offerings of schools with similar capacity but different enrollment percentages

<sup>27</sup> Student Achievement. *Journal of Educational Administration*. 46(1), 55-73. Retrieved from <http://edweb.sdsu.edu/schoolhouse/documents/wallspeak.pdf>

The Effect of the Physical Learning Environment on Teaching and Learning. Retrieved from [http://www.vit.vic.edu.au/SiteCollectionDocuments/PDF/1137\\_The-Effect-of-the-Physical-Learning-Environment-on-Teaching-and-Learning.pdf](http://www.vit.vic.edu.au/SiteCollectionDocuments/PDF/1137_The-Effect-of-the-Physical-Learning-Environment-on-Teaching-and-Learning.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> As part of the Office of Charter School's emerging strategic plan, we will:

- Adopt and enact clear, transparent policies and procedures that are grounded in research-based high-quality authorizing practices;
- Continue to support the District's strategic plan to turn around low-performing schools;
- Design best-in-class charter agreements that include accountability frameworks aligned to the District's student-focused, outcome-driven achievement indicators;
- Articulate what merits schools to be designated as high-performing and detail how high-performing charter schools will contribute to the District's portfolio of schools strategy;
- Illustrate what warrants a low-performing label and explain the authorizer's role in closing low-performing charter schools; and

- Support students and parents by creating an equitable educational structure that provides high-quality school choice.

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