

# Imagine 2014



Building a System of Great Schools

*Imagine* a great city system of schools in which teachers, principals, parents, staff, policymakers, and the entire community collectively focus all energy, efforts, planning and development, resources, and initiatives on building a 21st-century culture of achievement ... where children come first, excellence is the norm, talent is nurtured, opportunities are made equal, and success is measured by the steady improvement of teaching and learning in classrooms system-wide ... resulting in accelerated student progress ... a school system in which all students succeed, families have many quality choices, the staff is great, adults are accountable, and world-class operations support the entire enterprise.



## Getting Back to Basics

Countless individuals, community groups, and organizations from inside and outside the School District of Philadelphia generously participated in shaping a strategic direction for our schools for the next five years. This plan is really about getting *back to the basics*. Almost 30 years ago, Dr. Ron Edmonds said, “We already know everything we need to know about how to educate all children well. The question is ... do we have the will to do so?” The question is just as timely today: Do we, the adults in this community, have the political will to provide our children with a decent education? If we truly believe that every child in every Philadelphia classroom deserves an education equal in quality to the opportunities found in neighboring districts, we have our answer. The children deserve no less than our very best. Our vision is based on five goals:

- 1. STUDENT SUCCESS:** So that students will grow each year and graduate with the academic skills necessary for success in college, work, and life, we will provide specialized services, comprehensive supports, transition services, and high-quality instruction through ...

### Instructional Best Practices

- Clear and uniform teaching standards and expectations for teachers
- Professional development on differentiated instruction, academic rigor, and using data to inform instruction
- Teams of teachers working collaboratively



- Model classrooms for observing highly effective teachers in action
- Coaches or master teachers for all schools
- District-wide definition of multiculturalism that informs teaching and learning in all classrooms throughout the District



### Early Childhood Education

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- Regional Centers with early developmental screening, pre-school and parent classes, and take-home learning packets
- Early Childhood Centers in selected high schools
- Common standards for entry into kindergarten



### Elementary Schools

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- Supports for all students reading below the 40th percentile
- Gifted and talented programs
- Art and music instruction in all grades
- Regional Talent Centers where students can explore artistic, cognitive, and athletic interests
- Smaller class sizes (kindergarten: 20 students to 1 teacher; grades 1–3: 22 to 1)



### Middle Schools

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- Personalized learning environments through team teaching and “looping” for English and math teachers in which teachers stay with students more than one year
- Additional guidance counselors (150 to 1) who remain with students for three years
- Longer eight-period schedule to provide additional opportunities for exploration and enrichment



### High Schools

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- Three additional Career and Technical High Schools and one small high school to prepare future Philadelphia teachers
- More guidance counselors (200 to 1) who remain with students for four years
- Restructured school day to include seven periods plus an eighth period for remediation and enrichment
- Personalized learning environments through individual graduation plans for every 9th grader and looping for English and math teachers

- Student Success Centers in every high school
- Intramural athletic programs in all high schools
- Additional re-engagement programs, work-based experiences, SAT and ACT prep classes, dual-enrollment opportunities, and/or Advanced Placement (AP) and honors courses in all high schools



### All Schools

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- Early warning indicator system to support struggling students
- Regional Newcomer Welcome Centers to support new immigrant students
- Greater support for special education learners through inclusion whenever possible and implementing the Individualized Education Plan process with fidelity
- Safe learning environments with clear expectations, supports, and interventions
- Stronger parent and family engagement through ongoing communications, Parent Resource Centers, Parent University, and respect for different cultures and languages
- Stronger strategic partnerships with foundations; government agencies; businesses; colleges; and alumni, non-profit, community-based, and faith-based organizations

## 2. QUALITY CHOICES: To give our students every chance to be successful, we will build a system of schools in which success is rewarded and failure is not tolerated by ...

- Implementing a performance management system with uniform high standards and expectations to evaluate *all* schools – District, charter, and contract schools – and holding them accountable for student achievement
- Rewarding high-performing schools with greater autonomy and replicating their success (Vanguard Schools)
- Continuing to provide additional supports to struggling schools (Empowerment Schools)
- Embracing bold new educational approaches (both internal and external) with proven success when restructuring and transforming consistently low-performing schools (Renaissance Schools)
- Providing quality choices to students and parents and ensuring a transparent and inclusive decision-making process that engages students, parents, and the community

## 3. GREAT STAFF: To have a talented staff that reflects the diversity of our student body, we will ...

- Recruit the best candidates in a timely way so that all schools are fully staffed with great teachers, principals, and staff

- Open an Office of Teacher Affairs as a hub to support, inform, and advocate for teachers – from hiring to retirement
- Create Professional Development Centers where teachers, administrators, and all other staff can go to receive professional development and training tailored to their individual needs
- Create leadership institutes for all teachers, principals, and support staff aspiring to leadership positions in the District
- Implement a new standards-based evaluation process for teachers, principals, District support staff, and managers

**4. ACCOUNTABLE ADULTS:** To ensure that all employees understand the depth and breadth of their accountability for the success of our children and schools, we will ...

- Implement performance measurements for all schools and departments and tie evaluations to meeting system-wide goals
- Publish annual progress reports for all schools and the District
- Design strategic compensation packages to reward high performance
- Identify and require common standards of professionalism

**5. WORLD-CLASS OPERATIONS:** To provide the best business and operational practices that equitably support our educational mission, maximize efficiencies, and minimize costs, we will ...

- Create a forward-looking Facilities Master Plan to address “right-sizing” and the fair allocation of resources
- Build a District-wide information and telecommunications network that is effective and efficient
- Balance and align the annual budget with District goals
- Develop a weighted student funding formula to ensure equity

*Realizing Imagine 2014 will require a commitment from all of us – all who are capable of encouraging, challenging, teaching, supporting, inspiring, and celebrating the children of Philadelphia. We welcome your contributions to our thinking and to our work.*

**To see the full strategic plan, go to [www.philasd.org/strategicplan](http://www.philasd.org/strategicplan).**



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