

Imagine 2014

Building a system of great schools for all Philadelphia students

IMAGINE a great city system of schools where 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 where all students succeed, families have many quality choices, the staff is great, adults are accountable and world-class operations support the entire enterprise.

Key Priorities: Student Success, Quality Choices, Great Staff, Accountable Adults, and World-Class Operations

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 in...*

Early Childhood Education

- Regional Centers with early developmental screening, preschool and parent classes, and take-home learning packets
- Day care centers in selected high schools
- Develop common standards for kindergarten entry

Elementary Schools

- Supports for all students reading below the 40th percentile (Reading Recovery)
- 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 at the primary level (kindergarten-20 to 1, first through third grades-22 to 1)

Middle Schools

- Personalized learning environments through team teaching and looping for English and math teachers
- Increased number of guidance counselors (150 to 1) who remain with students for 3 years
- Lengthened eight-period schedule to provide added opportunities for exploration and enrichment

High Schools

- 3 additional career and technical high schools and 1 small high school to prepare future Philadelphia teachers
- Increased number of guidance counselors (200 to 1) who remain with each class 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 and College Access Centers in every high school
- Intramural athletic programs at all high schools
- Increased access to re-engagement programs, work-based experiences, SAT and ACT prep classes, dual enrollment opportunities, and AP and honors courses

All Schools

- Early warning indicator system to support struggling students
- Regional Newcomer Welcome Centers to support new immigrant students
- Implement the IEP process with fidelity and inclusion whenever possible to support special education learners
- Promote safe learning environments through positive school climates with clear expectations, supports and interventions
- Support parent and family engagement through ongoing communications, Parent Resource Centers, Parent University, and by being respectful of culture and language
- Mobilize the support and engagement of strategic partnerships with foundations, government agencies, businesses, colleges, alumni and community coalitions

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Quality Choices: *To do better by our students and give them every chance to be successful, we will build a system of schools where success is rewarded and failure is not tolerated by...*

- Providing quality choices to students and parents and ensuring their participation in making decisions on what happens at and to their schools
- Embracing bold new educational approaches (both internal and external) with proven track records of success when considering how to restructure and transform schools that have been failing our students for prolonged periods of time (Renaissance Schools)
- Continuing to provide additional supports to struggling schools (Empowerment Schools)
- Rewarding high-performing schools with greater autonomy and replicating their success (Vanguard Schools)
- 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

Great Staff: *To provide a talented staff that reflects the diversity of our student body, we will...*

- Recruit the best candidates on a timeline that promises a full complement of teachers, principals and staff for every school year
- Open an Office of Teacher Affairs as a hub to support, inform and advocate for teachers from hiring to retiring
- Provide a peer assistance program for new and struggling teachers
- Create leadership institutes that will provide ongoing professional and talent development for teachers, principals, aspiring school leaders, and support staff in different regions and throughout the year
- Implement a new standards-based evaluation process for teachers, principals, district support staff and managers

Accountable Adults: *To ensure that all employees understand the depth and breadth of their accountability for the success of our children and schools, and embrace their work as mission-based, we will...*

- Implement performance measurements for all schools and departments and tie system-wide evaluations to goals
- Require and make public annual progress reports from all schools
- Design strategic compensation packages to reward high performance
- Identify and require common standards of professionalism

World-Class Operations: *To provide the District with the best business and operational practices that equitably support the 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 yearly budget with District goals
- Develop a weighted student funding formula to ensure equity

The Planning Process for Imagine 2014:

Countless individuals, community groups and organizations from inside and outside the School District of Philadelphia generously participated in a process to help shape a strategic direction for our schools for the next five years. After many months of community meetings and listening symposiums, the work of sorting, summarizing, categorizing and prioritizing ideas, initiatives, and recommendations from a mountain of feedback has led to the release of our first draft of the District's strategic plan.

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 first draft of Philadelphia's very basic five-year strategic plan reflects Edmonds' findings: we know what our children need and we know how to make it happen. The question he posed years ago holds true for us as well, "Do we, the adults in this community, have the political will to do so?" *Imagine 2014* is now available for public comment and remains a work in progress until the SRC vote on April 15, 2009. The current draft represents the best thinking of individuals and groups from within and outside the District; as such, it belongs to all of us. If we truly believe that every child in every Philadelphia classroom deserves the promise of an education equal in quality to the educational opportunities found in neighboring districts, then we have our answer. With the political will of our people and abundant hope for the children, we will mobilize our collective responsibility to advance an agenda of school reform with equity and fidelity. The children deserve no less than our very best.

Please visit our website: www.philasd.org/strategicplan and join us in meeting the goals of IMAGINE 2014.

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