
Committee Meeting

of

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

*“The Committee will receive testimony from invited guests
on the ‘New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum’ (NJ QSAC),
the State monitoring system for evaluating the performance of school districts”*

LOCATION: Committee Room 6
State House Annex
Trenton, New Jersey

DATE: March 24, 2014
10:00 a.m.

MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE PRESENT:

Senator M. Teresa Ruiz, Chair
Senator Shirley K. Turner, Vice Chair
Senator Nellie Pou
Senator Michael J. Doherty



ALSO PRESENT:

Senator Sandra B. Cunningham
District 31

Anita M. Saynisch
*Office of Legislative Services
Committee Aide*

Osomo A. Thomas
*Senate Majority
Committee Aide*

Christopher Emigholz
*Senate Republican
Committee Aide*

***Meeting Recorded and Transcribed by
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SENATOR M. TERESA RUIZ (Chair): Good morning, everyone, and welcome to the Senate Education Committee meeting scheduled for March 24, 2014.

Roll call.

MS. SAYNISCH (Committee Aide): Senator Ruiz.

SENATOR RUIZ: Here.

MS. SAYNISCH: Senator Turner.

SENATOR TURNER: Here.

MS. SAYNISCH: Senator Pou, sitting in for Senator Beach.

SENATOR POU: Here.

MS. SAYNISCH: Senator Allen. (no response)

Senator Doherty.

SENATOR DOHERTY: Here.

SENATOR RUIZ: I also want to make mention that Senator Sandra Bolden Cunningham from Jersey City -- the second-largest municipality in the state -- is joining us today. And the reason for that -- and also Senator Pou is subbing in for Senator Beach -- was that we wanted to give an opportunity for the State-controlled districts to have their representatives serving on the Education Committee to kind of hear the QSAC process.

(SR-24 discussion and testimony extracted)

SENATOR RUIZ: So next we'll move on. And I want to thank everybody for their patience in starting this morning and, more importantly, for giving time to this Senate Education Committee to start the beginning of a conversation that should have been happening for a while.

I want to thank all the superintendents. And we're going to try to move this as expeditiously as possible. I know that all of you are within time constraints, and it's more important for you to be in your school districts than it is to be here today. So I am honored that you have decided to join us.

I'm going to call three superintendents. I know that you probably have voluminous detailed information that you can share with all of us. I will ask you to be mindful of time and to really just argue the facts. This is a fact-finding mission; it's not about one Administration, it's not about one Superintendent, it's not about getting an opportunity to have political policy conversation. It's about where we were in 2005 when the bill was constructed and where are we today in 2014. And in your years of doing this, what works and what doesn't work? You are the professionals on the ground -- you should be reporting to us to say, "These are the things that make sense; these factors determine strategic improvement plans; this doesn't work." So I hope that all of us will get an opportunity to see where we can move the QSAC bill, if there are needs for improvement, in the ongoing legislative session.

I'm going to ask Dr. Marcia Lyles, Superintendent of Jersey City Public Schools, to come up; Mr. Charles Sampson, Superintendent of Schools of Freehold Regional High School District; and Dr. Gary P. McCartney, Superintendent of Schools in South Brunswick.

And while you're all getting assembled, the Committee made an effort to try and get a cross sector of superintendents in the State of New Jersey -- all of us who have to deal with this actual process, but from a different lens.

The City of Camden and the City of Newark were invited, but for different reasons will not be able to join us today.

Dr. Lyles, when you're ready, the red button is on.

M A R C I A V. L Y L E S, Ed. D.: Good morning, Senators, and thank you very much for this opportunity to speak to you all.

Quite frankly, I was surprised at the invitation. New to Jersey City -- to New Jersey in fact -- I undoubtedly have a very limited perspective of the NJ QSAC process, especially since we are currently in the midst of this process in Jersey City, having completed our self-assessment in November and gearing up for our County review next week.

Subsequently, knowing very well how much we have worked on this, I feel that I can share nonetheless some of my preliminary insights into the process and the value of it for Jersey City.

Now, I have to confess that in preparation for the interview for the Superintendency of Jersey City, I read the previous district QSAC results and the subsequent corrective action plan to have an insight into the strengths and challenges of the District. And, as such, it provided me with a good deal of information -- information that I used as I interviewed, but also as I came in to do an early assessment of where we are and where we needed to go as a District.

However, I believe the best accountability measures improve performance, not only measure and rank it. I am not sure QSAC meets that standard.

My District colleagues tell me that this is a new, improved, and streamlined version -- much less burdensome -- and I can only say "thank you." I also have to say I believe we have a way to go. We spent hundreds

of hours reviewing materials and preparing documents, and it was nonetheless primarily a compliance activity and, to some extent at the very least, redundant and very close in some instances, to double jeopardy.

A prime example of redundancy would include the mandatory comprehensive audits that assess our fiscal operational and personnel operations that we already participate in annually. We pay a hefty price for this mandate and it yields important data in real time -- or almost real time. Nonetheless, we engage in the same process when we go through our QSAC information. The data is real, the data is important, but the data, obviously, is something that we are already collecting.

And as we speak of data, perhaps one of the greatest redundancies is pulling down this information from NJ SMART. That very data is what I also believe represents for us double jeopardy. We already are subject to the sanctions for not meeting the ESEA waiver targets in some instances, and then we lose points and are again subjected to sanctions through QSAC. More importantly, as a District under partial State control, it is not clear to me the role our QSAC results will play in getting out of that status.

Jersey City has been under some form of the State control for decades, and although we have recently gained control over key areas, does QSAC performance adequately measures our readiness to return to full control? Questions abound for me. What is the magic score for control? What is the passing score? Do we need 5 out of 5, 4 out of 5? Is it an average? Did this conversation take place after the last review? Do we have to wait three more years following this for the conversation to take place?

Ironically, the QSAC process does not capture the key components of our core work -- preparing our students for college and career. It does not

take a look at how effectively we assess the efficacy of our programs, policies, and practices. It does not capture the quality of our partnerships to improve student achievement. It does not move us towards effective planning.

It does, though, provide us with some insights; however, I think the statement of assurance that we go through every year would provide that same kind of insight and help us to keep on target.

As I said at the beginning, I am very new to the QSAC process, but these are many preliminary understandings and feelings about it.

Thank you very much.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you, Dr. Lyles. It's interesting that even though you're new, while you are highlighting some of the elements several Superintendents are nodding their heads. So the indicators that you're showing for redundancy appears to be something across the board.

I will ask you, if you get a chance to -- if you have not -- to share your testimony via e-mail.

DR. LYLES: I will forward this.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you very much.

Any questions or comments from Committee members for Dr. Lyles?

Senator Cunningham.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Good morning, Dr. Lyles. It's nice to see you -- first time I've seen you in Trenton.

DR. LYLES: Good morning.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Good to see you here.

You know, I just wanted to ask you, when you look at the QSAC scores from three years ago and you look at what you're doing in Jersey City

now, do you see a difference? Or do you in any way interpret what they did for QSAC three years ago was adequate then?

DR. LYLES: Well, very definitely our QSAC scores are -- from our self-assessment-- As I said, we undergo the County review next week. But from our self-assessment, our QSAC scores are improved in every single area -- and even from the self-assessment from the prior review. So very definitely we have made progress. I guess part of the question that I have put to my staff is: Was it based upon QSAC scores, or was it part of what we knew had to be done? And, quite frankly, I don't believe that the QSAC necessarily guided that, although clearly if this is an indicator of our getting out of the status we want to do well on the scores.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Thank you.

GARY P. MCCARTNEY, Ed. D.: Good morning, Chairwoman Ruiz and esteemed members of the Committee.

My name is Gary McCartney, and I bring you greetings from South Brunswick School District, where I have the good fortune to serve as Superintendent of Schools.

In the interest of full disclosure, I also want to mention that I have two volunteer capacities that I serve in. I serve as President of the New Jersey Association of School Administrators, and as well I serve as the President of the Board of Trustees of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools.

I share this information only with the hope that you won't interpret anything I say as anything other than forthright.

Let me begin by providing a piece of perspective, if you will. We've been through QSAC a couple of times, as well as with the Statement of

Assurance process in the interim years. And going through it, we've been through it in its original 350-item form that it was originally designed as, and in the revised form of 50 items. In both instances we came away from that process being regarded as a high-performing school. I share that so that you don't have any sense that we are upset with the process because of the outcome.

I do want to talk for just a couple of minutes about several items that I believe are what would be considered user outcomes or user observations of the process. And I understand what the statute says: the statute regarding QSAC talks about making sure that all districts are operating at a high level of performance, and likewise that the capacity of each school district can be measured with the five areas of performance that are built into the system.

So let me begin with that as a backdrop and provide you with a couple of -- three -- user observations.

Number one: QSAC is a cumbersome process to accomplish. It involves the self-evaluation; it involves a team visit, written reports, and extensive Department of Ed review. Let me share just our most recent experience from a chronological point of view.

We had to do a self evaluation, which seems very pertinent, and we did that. And we put it together and submitted it to the County in November of 2012. We hosted a team visit tied to that self evaluation in June of 2013. And we received a letter from the Department of Ed in January 2014 indicating that we had succeeded in the process. And in February of 2014 we received certification from the State Board of education that, indeed, we were proclaimed as a high-performing district.

With over 600 districts in the state, I understand that this is a very challenging process. At the same time, I think that lack of timeliness detracts from the outcome in getting meaningful results.

A second point that I'd like to share is, the one size fits all approach is both counterproductive and counterintuitive. What I mean by that is that assistance should be focused where it is most needed. School districts designated as high performing should be handled differently from those that are in need of more intensive assistance. And if I could draw a parallel, I would just suggest that when we talk about supervision, Dr. Allan Glatthorn of the University of Pennsylvania -- formerly -- had a differentiated supervision process -- that he suggested that those more in need of help shouldn't be supervised the same way as those less in need. And I would suggest that the resources of the Department of Ed could probably be better utilized in circumstances where they focused on the districts that most needed the help. And I mean that with no slight at all. I believe that there are resources that can help all districts. They ought to be applied in measures that are appropriate to the need that exists.

And the third and final point that I'd like to make is that much of QSAC, by design, is of a compliance nature. I believe a better and more focused approach would be for school districts to work in the arena of school improvement. I believe that that's what all school districts need. Abraham Lincoln, perhaps, said it best when he said, "The largest room in any organization is the room for improvement." We all recognize and accept that.

I would hope that the Commissioner would provide options for school districts as we move forward so that schools could apply more of

their time to the area of school improvement. The Department of Ed would not have to investigate that process. They wouldn't have to provide the field work to make it happen or monitor it; and nor would they have to house the work from it electronically. And, at the same time, the DOE would have real-time access to review district progress if, indeed, they had the option to have school districts working in the arena of school improvement.

Now what I mean by that is, there is a strategic planning option that's available to all New Jersey school districts, and it's currently used by many of them. It's commonly referred to as school accreditation. And it's available through several providers. And earlier, when I was forthright in my disclaimer of indicating that I was with the Middle States Association in a volunteer capacity -- there are other accreditation providers. So I'm not suggesting that only one provider would be able to help schools. But every one of our schools and colleges need to have accreditation. It sends a very clear message about the standards that the schools have met and how they met them through a series of indicators. I believe that if we spent more of our time working on achieving the standards that are related to school improvement, that all of our districts would be better situated.

Now I will stop at this point, acknowledging that there are many colleagues who also want to share their thoughts on QSAC. I only hope that, in my commentary, that in some way I may have provided you some insights on this process.

I thank you again for the opportunity to share my thoughts.

Thank you.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you.

And what I want to remind everyone is that this has been -- in just the short timeframe, at least, very helpful and eye opening to me. But if you do have solid, concrete-- For me, this is the beginning of a conversation. What I want to do is encourage all of you in your capacities as professionals. You know exactly what can work and should have worked. So in your ideal venue, what would this process look like to you? And feel free to send that information to Osomo Thomas and to my office so that, when we start collecting material to overhaul some of the policies that are in place, we really see it from the lens and perspective of stakeholders and the officials who are on deck all the time.

DR. McCARTNEY: Absolutely.

CHARLES B. SAMPSON: Thank you, Chairwoman Ruiz and members of the Senate Education Committee, for allowing me the opportunity to provide testimony regarding the New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum.

I will shorten some of my remarks because they echo the sentiments of my colleagues in many important ways. But I will start by saying that for the past three years I've served as the Superintendent for the Freehold Regional High School system in Monmouth County, New Jersey. We serve 11,600 students; we've been identified as a high-performing district under QSAC monitoring.

I also serve as the Treasurer of the Garden State Coalition of Schools, and we represent over 80 school districts throughout the State of New Jersey. Previously I was the Superintendent for the Verona Public Schools in Essex County, where we were also designated a high-performing school district under QSAC.

I think it's important to give some scope to some of the actions and activities and monitoring that takes place in a school district the size of Freehold Regional High School District, in addition to QSAC, to really bring home some of those areas of redundancy for the Committee.

In my three years as Superintendent, our school district has undergone the following monitorings: consolidated subgrant monitoring that examined various elements of our Title I, Title II, career and technical ed, IDEA, and special education programs that consisted of no less than 12 Department of Ed officials in our District for four straight days; a survey audit for post-secondary students with disabilities; a specific Title I audit; QSAC, in January 2013 -- whereas I noted we were designated as high performing; and an audit of our home instruction alternative education programs by the Office of the State Auditor. In addition to that we presented an annual testing report to the public; we undergo an annual financial audit; and present our violence and vandalism numbers twice a year, including our HIB grades this year. We've also submitted -- or will submit extensive data to the State in preparation for AchieveNJ through NJ SMART, including staff certification data, graduation cohort data; our mid-year budget reviews which are mandated with the County Office and necessitate an explanation of how and what resources are being deployed to various initiatives, including Common Core, PARCC testing, new teacher evaluation. Finally, we have continued our Middle States accreditation throughout this cycle with our mid-year visitations in the beginning of a self-study for District-wide accreditation.

I share this with you because a great deal of the data required within all of the above mentioned occurrences is duplicated within QSAC. The

fiscal management component of QSAC encompasses much if not all of the work done in preparation for the annual audit. The operations category contains all of the requirements regarding violence and vandalism; the instruction and program category contains graduation data and information regarding curriculum alignment to the Common Core that is submitted to the State in other venues. The personnel component of QSAC is now captured almost entirely within NJ SMART. In one extreme example, one of the categories in QSAC is to print and present a screenshot from an NJ SMART submission that demonstrates reporting deadlines with fewer than 2 percent errors. Certainly this data is already available to the State. Given the significant overlap, an extension of the QSAC timelines beyond three years -- particularly for school districts already designated as high performing -- and a thorough examination that builds upon the recommendations of the 2011-2012 Education Task Force would be advantageous to all schools across the state, I believe.

With the advent of an entirely new system of student assessment with PARCC, it might be time to rethink QSAC entirely to identify core metrics as indicators of organizational health and effectiveness that focus on student outputs and not compliance checklists. With the rapid expanse of NJ SMART, introduction of new performance reports from the State DOE, and new systems of evaluating and monitoring staff and student achievement, QSAC -- even with the revisions adopted in 2012 -- has become a dated tool that fails to most effectively gauge the broad range of avenues that school systems may provide to engender student success.

One size does not fit all.

The extensions called for in S-135 and S-721 would allow for the opportunity to explore those ways to make QSAC more effective, and extend those deadlines for high performing districts and further assist school districts in focusing on student outcomes.

Milton Chen states that modern learning necessitates the utilization of modern tools. The compliance checklist nature of QSAC ignores more authentic indicators of a successful school system, and overly burdens districts that have repeatedly performed at the highest levels. As we reset the playing field to incorporate the new mandates as established by State and Federal authorities, we should look also to develop a new tool that recognizes the distinctions and nuanced differences amongst public schools while providing for metrics of growth not found in other reports that are already provided by school districts within other reporting requirements.

Thank you.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you very much.

Any questions or comments from Committee members? (no response)

Thank you, Superintendents. Thank you very much.

Next I'll ask Bari Erlichson, the Assistant Commissioner, Department of Education, and her team to come up.

BARI ERLICHSON, Ph.D.: Good morning.

My name is Bari Erlichson; I'm an Assistant Commissioner at the New Jersey Department of Education in the Division of Data, Research, Evaluation, and Reporting.

I began working for the Department about eight years ago when the Department awarded Montclair State University a contract to launch

QSAC in 15 Abbott Districts. I was the project lead for that work at Montclair and subsequently was hired full-time by the Department.

It's a privilege to be here this morning to discuss the Department's monitoring efforts. Almost 10 years ago the Quality Single Accountability Continuum Act was passed by the Legislature, and so it's fitting to review and discuss the implementation of QSAC and its impact on both the work of the Department and the effectiveness of school districts.

In 1975, the Legislature mandated that the Commissioner of Education develop a uniform way to evaluate the performance of each school district in order to judge whether the district was meeting the thorough and efficient -- the so-called *T & E* -- standards of the State Constitution. The original T & E standards included elements relating to school district planning, curriculum, student outcomes, professional development of staff, finance, and the implementation of State and Federal programs.

On a yearly basis school districts reported their efforts in the T & E elements in the Quality Assurance Annual Report -- the QAAR -- a so-called *desk audit*, and each district underwent a Department-level site visit every seven years.

As a result of the changing accountability requirements from the introduction of the content standards in 1996 and the Federal Accountability and No Child Left Behind in 2002, it became clear that while the T & E standards represented a good start toward understanding the functions of the school district, that the patchwork quilt of other requirements and expectations had grown so that a fragmented system of monitoring and accountability now existed.

In response to that the QSAC Act was adopted in September 2005, and administrative regulations were adopted by the Commissioner in 2007.

The purpose of QSAC was to create a single accountability system for all public school districts in the state, putting together in one place, in one comprehensive set of objective standards, all of the legal and regulatory requirements and other accountability measures that school districts must comply with. QSAC established five areas of school district effectiveness: instruction and program, personnel, fiscal management, operations management, and governance; and requires the Department to conduct an evaluation of a district's capacity and effectiveness in each of those five areas.

Capacity refers to the ability to perform well in all areas of district operations, the ability to meet State and Federal policy requirements, and to achieve levels of student outcomes. Effectiveness refers to the quality of that performance in addition to the fact that each task has been performed. From those requirements to judge both capacity and effectiveness of school districts, the New Jersey Department of Education created a set of indicators in each of the five areas. The indicators were compiled in an assessment tool called the *District Performance Reviews* -- the DPRs.

The legislature created in QSAC the designation of a *high-performing school district* if the district met 80 to 100 percent of its QSAC performance indicators in all five areas. And although the legislation created this type of differentiated distinction, it did not authorize the Department to treat such districts any differently than those that did not reach that level of distinction with regard to the frequency of monitoring.

Those districts that did not reach 80 percent in any given area are required to create a corrective action plan in that particular area.

As required by the QSAC law, each district undergoes a full QSAC site visit every three years, as opposed to the seven year timeframe that was in the QAAR. The process begins, as you've heard, by the district conducting a self-assessment. The committee that does that inside the district is required to support their work with appropriate documentation so that the Department's review by the County Superintendents can reach their own conclusions.

The implementation of QSAC initially involved approximately 350 indicators in the five DPR areas. The Department, at the time, took the approach of including both best practice indicators that would describe effective districts as a whole, and also identify all possible statutes and regulations where the Department was required to provide oversight.

The response from the school districts was not positive. In essence, despite the fact that QSAC had served its purpose of organizing, under one umbrella, all of its monitoring activities and had succeeded in somewhat reducing the fragmentation of monitoring that had existed, school districts felt that QSAC was largely a paper pushing exercise not connected to teaching and learning.

The Department set to work to streamline QSAC in 2011. We reduced the number of indicators that were actively monitored from 350 to 52, and asked superintendents to certify that they were meeting the others as an annual statement of assurance. We removed all best practice indicators entirely and focused solely on those indicators that are required of us by the Legislature and the Federal government. And as a result of the

Education Transformation Task Force, we've been seeking a host of regulatory changes to further reduce the burden that compliance takes on our school districts.

Yet even with that, dramatic streamlining challenges and tensions remain. I'm sure you'll hear from the other Superintendents who are to follow -- in addition to the ones who spoke before me -- that QSAC does not help them focus on improving student outcomes in their districts. Most feel that it is purely a compliance exercise that diverts them and their staff from their work as educators. We heard that message loud and clear in our Education Task Force transformation work, and know that that feeling is particularly acute amongst school districts that are, in fact, doing already what they should be doing in their district operations.

The tension, of course, is that the Legislature and the public have a legitimate interest in having the Department monitor the implementation of the laws that they pass. QSAC is the only such vehicle for that oversight and does, at times, provide important information. Last year in our monitoring of more than 200 school districts, for instance, we found that 88 percent of the districts had curriculum alliance to all 9 content standards -- including the Common Core standards. But we also find that in the face of compliance with inputs versus outputs, that districts often engage in activities designed to check the box rather than meaningful efforts that will lead to long-term success. For instance, several years ago in one district we found that they had downloaded the curriculum of a neighboring district, removed that district's cover page, and relabeled it as their own. And in and of itself that's not a problem; we encourage school districts to share materials. But our interviews of teachers in the district led us to conclude

that they had not seen that curriculum and that it was not being used in classrooms across the district.

Educators recognize this behavior as test busting, where they seek to get students to simply pass the test without necessarily taking in the meaning of the content.

In moving from the seven-year timeframe for site visits under the QAAR to the three-year timeframe for site visits in QSAC, the monitoring workload for the Department, and also for the school districts, more than doubled. In the case of the Department this increase in workload was not accompanied by an increase in head count to conduct these monitoring visits. Thus by necessity many of the reviews became perfunctory and, as you have heard this morning, are often not timely. But it also fundamentally reshaped the role of our field staff. County Superintendents had once been viewed as a confidant, and some still are. They were individuals who could engage in casual mentoring and coaching of their colleagues, and that could drop in on districts to provide advice as needed. Now, due in large part to the compliance-oriented role and the corresponding workload, our County offices are not viewed as providing high-quality support.

Under Commissioner Cerf, a concerted effort was begun to shift the Department away from compliance-based activities. As part of our NCLB waiver in 2011 we established Regional Achievement Centers to assist our lowest performing schools -- the kind of differentiated support that Dr. McCartney spoke about -- with improving their instructional practice and student outcomes. The staffs of the Regional Achievement Centers do not participate in monitoring. Also under the waiver, we freed nearly a

thousand schools from the failure label associated with No Child Left Behind and gave the responsibility for charting their improvement back to the local school district, rather than to a team of external individuals who would have conducted a one-week site visit.

But much work remains to be done to fulfill the vision of the Department becoming an agency that is supportive of its schools and districts, and bettering student outcomes. And I look forward this morning to listening to other superintendents and testimony from others as to how the Department can continue these efforts.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you.

Based on your timeframe, and your institutional knowledge, it appears that through your lens the Department would have very concrete ways for us to overhaul the Bill, and I'm hoping that we can get that information when we begin to look at it.

I heard clearly that you're looking at changing regulation. The problem with doing that in some capacity is there's always a timeframe that is set for the Commissioner who is there, and so that will drive regulatory processes important for us -- that if we're going to overhaul this, that it's done by statute so that this way we have a better framework in place. And we're starting to hear the same words over and over again: redundancy, not a cookie cutter approach, the timeframe, it's a compliance measure, it's not meeting the same standards. So if everyone's recognizing this -- from districts in State-operated districts to districts that are high performing -- there's a clear need for us to overhaul the statute.

You made mention that you reduced the number of factors through the regulatory process. Did you do that across the board for State-operated districts as well?

DR. ERLICHSON: Yes.

SENATOR RUIZ: Do you think that-- So I guess part of this-- This is part of a two-pronged approach process -- for me, in any event. The QSAC process -- and I'm sure that was not the intention -- left too much subjectivity to the Commissioner and the Department. So even if we were meeting certain benchmarks of criteria that were in place, the Department always has the discretion to say, "Although you're showing improvement and you're exceeding, we're not going to return these different segments back to local control" -- which is a critical issue, I think, that many of us are dealing with across the state. I'm hoping that we will collectively work on that because it shows efforts. In addition to that, is that the trigger mark to take over a district has to be overhauled as well so that there-- QSAC appears to have benchmarks for the district. I think the fundamental question here, that really struck me when I was first elected into office, is that State-operated districts are State responsibility -- so we can't decide when we're going to point the finger to local communities for the incapacity of meeting certain benchmarks or not quantifying when, in fact, it's the State that has always been responsible. So overhauling a bill that has time attached to it, but benchmarks for both what the State is required to do and what the district is required to do. I believe the intent of QSAC was to provide kind of the things that we oftentimes talk about in this Committee room -- that DOE should move away from this top-down approach and it should really be an incubator for research and resources. And it seems that

we oftentimes get caught because of policy or practice, or lack of capacity, as far as resources.

So any questions or comments from--

Senator Pou.

SENATOR POU: Thank you, thank you, Madam Chair.

You know, first of all let me just say that I'm really very happy to see that you're here and you're providing testimony. Thank you so very much for your willingness to come before our Committee and do that.

I think this is a much overdue conversation. I want to commend the Chairwomen for taking the lead in doing this.

Certainly many of us -- myself included, as a Senator who represents the 35th Legislative District and knows all too well what it means to have a State-controlled school system in Paterson -- one of which has undergone so many throughout the many years -- so many different changes when you look in terms of the number of years that we have been under State control. When you look in terms of the numbers of Superintendents that we've had, when you look in terms of the number State Commissioners that have made that change as well -- that has, indeed, affected many of us.

But we clearly know what -- we're clearly in a direction of the great path. We want to be able to get there. I'm happy to see that there is some discussion to move in that direction. You've heard already from some of the previous speakers where there is the redundancy, where there is the need to-- Much too much time is placed upon a compliance approach as opposed to looking for ways on how we can improve upon our school systems, and what kind of support system the State can provide in that direction rather than constantly being in a test mode, evaluation process.

In your discussion, with respect to the capacity building and the effectiveness in terms of what the QSAC is all about, and the five indicators that are going to lead to that approach, I ask you to please help us understand what are some of the major drivers that you think we are today looking at differently, that you looked at seven years ago and where are we today. What are some of those changes that you think you might be able to share with us?

DR. ERLICHSON: To tease out your question -- do you mean in the reduction from 350 to 52 indicators?

SENATOR POU: I can't believe we had 350 to begin with, to be honest with you. I don't even know how that was possible.

DR. ERLICHSON: The theory of action in the beginning was that you would have a DPR that would describe the particular area very well. So you'd have a fiscal DPR that had measures of the degree to which student achievement outcomes were being used in budgeting decisions -- which is a best practice indicator, right? In personnel, you'd find the same idea: to what degree your student achievement outcome is being used to describe professional development activities. And those are the types of behaviors that effective school districts engage in as a matter of routine. But they were best practice indicators, in the sense that they weren't tied to particular statute or regulation.

Today we do have a lot of confusing statutes and regulations that overlap and provide that kind of redundancy. I mean, without--

SENATOR POU: And can you highlight for us and, certainly, through the Chair, provide that information?

DR. ERLICHSON: A really easy one is that we have Federal law around the Guns-Free Schools Act, where the school districts are required to report out on their incidents with various weapons. Weapons is defined in two different ways under that statute. The Federal Office of Civil Rights asks us to report on discipline incidents. The Federal Office of Special Education requires us to report out on the types of discipline being used specifically for special education students. And in the State we have our own statute around violence and vandalism reporting, and harassment and intimidation and bullying. So we have six different things that come together in a school district to essentially describe how, to what degree, the school has constructed a safe and conducive learning environment. And I would tell you that we have not necessarily resulted in the kinds of schools that have that environment writ whole, writ as large; and that the Superintendents themselves would probably venture forward with -- if they were going to do this absent all that other Federal reporting -- that they would do it through climate surveys and parental engagement, and all of those types of softer activities that we don't require any type of reporting on.

SENATOR POU: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you, Assistant Commissioner, for your response.

I'd like to, perhaps, maybe-- This is an area that obviously is going to be important to all of us here.

One final question, if I may. You've made mention that for your -- did you say your lower-performing district was the Regional--

DR. ERLICHSON: The Regional Achievement Centers.

SENATOR POU: --Achievement Centers, yes. Tell me, please, if you would share with the Committee, what is it that you anticipate or expect to have that so assist in providing you with the kind of feedback that's going to make a difference in terms of that district, and report within the county jurisdiction -- the regional jurisdiction and that of the statewide jurisdiction? Because obviously there are many layers in between. How do we reduce that? How do we make sure that we're talking in one direction and not in multiple directions, and that it's going to help to improve the performance outcome that you're looking for?

DR. ERLICHSON: So you just asked a very good question which highlights one of the differences between QSAC and our authority, under our Federal elementary and secondary education act waiver.

So QSAC is a district-level analysis, and the authorities granted to us under the ESEA is for school-based activities. So the Regional Achievement Centers are working directly with schools to implement research-based improvement practices around effective instruction, effective leadership, effective school climates, effective parental engagement, effective use of time and resources -- I'm sure I forgot a few of the pushes that we're working with. But it is a school-based strategy -- that we are in schools across the state.

Now, the identification of the schools that are receiving that type of support is through our Federal waiver. There are two types: they are called *Priority* which is the lowest 5 percent of schools across the state in terms of basic student achievement outcomes. It also includes our school improvement grant recipients in Focus. And those are schools that have focus issues in subgroup performances, or lower graduation rates.

SENATOR POU: Thank you, again.

Just a common question -- I'm just going to make mention that your school-based strategy, which is-- I believe I've heard that before during some of our budget discussions -- the now-former Commissioner Cerf has mentioned that in the past. My comment then and my comment today will be that, while all of that is good and important, we certainly need to understand that while all of those strategies are in place, the school system and the school districts Superintendent, along with their support staff, are being asked and being pulled in multiple ways; being asked to be responsible and respond to that. Their resources are being limited because of all the different requirements that they are being asked to -- again, not getting to the heart of the situation, which is how do we help to improve our school performance level in our school district when they're being pulled in multiple directions.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you, Senator Pou.

Senator Cunningham.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Yes, through the Chair, good morning. It's nice to see you.

I don't know if this is a question or a statement, but certainly it's an observation.

In Jersey City we've had many Superintendents of Schools since the school system has been under State control. And we're still under control; it's been years, it's been years. And somehow or another there is no clarity as to how you actually get from under. It just seems that once the State takes control, that's it. And with all of the various Superintendents we have

had, we've still not been able to hit that magic number to take back control. I think Dr. Lyles alluded to something -- that you don't know what that number is that is going to make the difference.

So I think that as this process continues, one of the things that I think needs to be clarified is: Where is the light at the end of the tunnel and how do you get to that light? Because it's not clear.

DR. ERLICHSON: So just as a point of clarity -- Jersey City has regained control in three of their areas.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: But not total.

DR. ERLICHSON: Not total -- but they're working towards personnel, and instruction and program. And as Dr. Lyles mentioned, the County review is next week, and Dave Hesse looks forward to reviewing those outcomes.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: So hopefully we'll be at the light out of the tunnel?

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you, Senator Cunningham. I think you highlighted yet again what I stated earlier. There is too much subjectivity in the QSAC bill for the Department of Education. And I say that respectfully; it has nothing to do with-- I mean, I've witnessed it firsthand as a resident and as an elected official for the City of Newark. Regardless as to whether we're meeting those benchmarks, there are always opportunities for that current Commissioner and Department of Education to continue oversight of any one of the factors, regardless as to what benchmark we're meeting. And that's certainly something that we will be undertaking here.

I want to thank you for joining us today, and I'm going to urge you and encourage you. It appears that you have many things that you would

like to see cleaned up. And if you could forward that to me, and if there are ways that we can do that through an effective and efficient way to clean up statutes that's, I believe, one of the most important things that legislators have to do. Oftentimes we get into rooms, we have conversations that really launch statute changes, and we never get an opportunity to revisit to see if they're meeting modern day needs.

So thank you very much.

DR. ERLICHSON: Thank you.

SENATOR RUIZ: Next we'll hear from Superintendent Dr. Brian Osborne, Superintendent of South Orange and Maplewood; Dr. Antoinette Rath, Superintendent of Mount Laurel Schools; and Dr. Jordan Schiff, Superintendent of Hillsborough Township Public Schools.

Good morning.

BRIAN G. OSBORNE, Ed. D.: Okay, Senator, thank you very much; thanks to the Committee for having us. We really appreciate the opportunity to contribute to this important conversation.

I very much hear the call this morning for specific and concrete recommendations, and we will work on a detailed prescription for your consideration following the hearing.

My prepared testimony and thoughts are almost identical to what the Committee has heard this morning entered into the record by Charles Sampson, the Superintendent of Freehold Regional. His description of the multiple and redundant auditing and compliance activity is exactly what we had experienced in South Orange-Maplewood School District, so I won't repeat all of that.

I would like to just add two thoughts: first, South Orange-Maplewood School District has made remarkable progress over the last seven years; and the progress that we've made comes from the discipline of focus. We fend off and dispense with distractions that threaten to throw us off of our game plan. The amount of time and energy that goes into responding to these splintered and redundant audits, QSAC templates, compliance paperwork, and RAC visits is one of the single biggest distractions that threaten our ability to execute on our focused improvement efforts.

So my job as Superintendent, when this comes up in the District, is to assure senior staff that actually the most responsible approach that we can take is to minimize our preparation efforts for QSAC so that it does not end up diverting us from our core work.

In addition, the feedback we receive from the massive amounts of compliance information that we submit is of little value to us. Occasionally it does uncover something that we need to attend to, but it's usually a picayune legal detail and far from high leverage points that would help us improve teaching and learning.

The second thought is that it may be helpful -- although certainly cumbersome -- to widen the scope of the inquiry here beyond QSAC to all the ways that unnecessary regulation and compliance activity threatens to undermine the stability and focus of districts; that districts need to improve education and ensure that all students are ready for college and career.

Thank you.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you.

J O R D E N S C H I F F, Ed. D.: Good morning. I have also submitted my remarks to the Committee, so I'll be relatively brief.

I agree with my colleague from South Orange-Maplewood as well as the other Superintendents who have testified this morning.

I have had the opportunity to work in two different high- performing districts -- Hillsborough, where I currently am, which is a district in Somerset County with 7,200 kids, over 1,200 staff; and as Superintendent of Readington Township Schools in Hunterdon County, with about 300 or so staff members with about 2,200 students.

Our process as we begin to look at QSAC begins with the self-assessment -- that was discussed before. All of these documents are crosschecked with a representative body from the community, including administrators, teachers, parents, and board members -- also take a look at this.

We have logged hundreds of hours each time we go through the QSAC process. The review is then certified by the Superintendent; after I certify it, then it goes to the Department of Education. And then the Executive County Superintendent, as well as the Executive County BA, as well as the Executive County educational professional -- who is in the office as well -- comes and does a site supervision in District, including interviews as well as a documentation review.

Although this is important work, it does consume many hours of local staff time and the County Office's time as well. I'm concerned that the frequency, every three years, is not necessary for high-performing districts. If the district performs well enough through the QSAC monitoring process, then the district should be able to be monitored every seven years rather than every three. The time that the local district spends every three years preparing for monitoring could be better spent focusing on

the teaching and learning process. The Executive County Superintendent's Office could better focus on needy districts rather than monitoring of high-performing districts every three years. The county superintendents are now responsible for multiple counties, when a few short years ago we were responsible for only one county. With many more districts falling under fewer county superintendents, it becomes critical that their time be spent where it is needed most -- with districts that struggle to meet the QSAC DPRs.

There's a bill, however, that is currently making its way through the legislative process that will positively address this concern. Senator Bateman's bill, S-135, permits high-performing districts to be monitored by the DOE every seven years rather than every three years. This common sense legislation recognizes that not all districts need to be painted with such a broad brush. High-performing districts could spend more time with their students and less time documenting compliance; while the county offices could focus their scarce time on districts needing the assistance the most.

Once again, I appreciate your time and attention.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you.

A N T O I N E T T E R A T H, Ed.D.: Thank you; good morning, Senator Ruiz. Good morning, Senators and Committee members.

Thank you for affording me the time to express my opinions on QSAC. And like my colleagues, my words may not be as eloquent but my thoughts are all the same.

I am the Superintendent of Schools in Mount Laurel School District in Mount Laurel, New Jersey -- home of Mount Laurel I and II Affordable

Housing Decision. We are District Factor I, and certainly meet the needs of all youngsters in our district.

My experience is not different from many. I can assure you that all schools want their children to achieve, and all schools will do what it takes to demonstrate accountability to their stakeholders.

QSAC, as it's currently administered, as you've heard from my colleagues, is very narrowly defined by standardized processes. And it holds all schools, regardless of needs, to adherence to process rather than to student outcomes. Hence, the consequences created by having a centralized accountability measure for schools gives rise to an appearance of contradiction -- and that contradiction being trying to control standards that are made remotely with the unique priorities that are developed at the local level. That balance becomes difficult. And as a result, districts are expending energy and resources trying to satisfy a process that really may or may not have bearing to local goals and directions.

So to that end, again to underscore what my colleagues have said, perhaps looking at the space and time between visitations in terms of accountability -- can a district that presents as a highly effective district be held to accountability visits every seven years rather than the current three, and so forth. This will allow State resources to be allocated more wisely to where the area of need is.

And also I have to applaud the fact that the underscore of QSAC philosophy is that of shared accountability, but I do consider the current process to be viewed more as a sanction rather than an inspiration. And if we can balance that, that would be very helpful.

Thank you.

SENATOR RUIZ: Very compelling -- the last line. Thank you very much.

DR. RATH: Thank you.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you all.

I'm going to ask Ms. Donna Chiera, President of the American Federation of Teachers New Jersey, AFL-CIO; and Mr. Wendell Steinhauer, President of New Jersey Education Association, to both come up.

And while the Superintendents are moving away in the next panel, I'm going to take this point of personal privilege as Chair of the Education Committee -- while the Department is still sitting here listening -- that caps for our Superintendents is a matter of urgency that we should be having a conversation about.

Duly noted? Okay.

Good morning.

D O N N A M. C H I E R A: Good morning. I want to thank Senator Ruiz for beginning the conversation, because I think that's a very important phrase.

Listening to the testimony here this morning, one of the things I realized was how old I am. Because I actually remember the old T & E monitoring when people would come into the district and we would actually practice. So if someone came and asked us a question, we knew it. And then we went to QAAR, and now we're at QSAC.

I was President of the Perth Amboy Federation for 23 years, and I went through all three of these types of monitoring programs. And again the question is, why are we doing it? Is it a measurement for consequence, or is it a diagnostic for improvement?

Most people believe it's a compliance exercise -- and everyone heard that today. And it's really not focused on teaching and learning; it's focused on quantity of documentation you can produce versus the quality of the activities going on in your district. So I would take *quality* out of QSAC to begin with.

This exercise in compliance leaves a paper trail of documentation to supposedly what's going on in the district. Talking to members from all over the state who go through this process, all too often they say that the paper trail is a paper trail, and not necessarily what's really being implemented in the district, what's going on -- but what is needed so we can pass.

This is a ping pong effect. When you talk about State control versus local control, QSAC-- It's not really consistent. I mean, in Edison there was a fire. That is something you cannot count on, and so I'm guessing their QSAC and their evaluation tool for this year may not live up to other years. And just counting on scores and documentation, things change in districts from year to year. That's a ping pong effect; there's really not a stability in the program because it's done every three years.

I personally think the whole process needs to be looked at -- not just whether you do it three years, five years, or seven years. And it goes back to a true action plan in districts. What's going on; what are we going to do to focus on teaching and learning?

A suggestion -- and so much has been said. I think we need to do some balancing. We need to do some balancing on what's needed for the district besides what's needed for the schools. You just can't say, "school improvement plans," because in so many of our, especially urban centers,

schools depend on each other. There's a lot of student mobility. So if we just focus on a school plan, and not the district plan, we're not going to get very far.

There also needs to be a balance between a comprehensive plan process versus an intrusive plan. And every monitoring program I have been through has been more intrusive than comprehensive. And once the monitors go away, we just go back to what we were doing and that really doesn't change or improve a district.

The other thing we need to look at -- if you look at the last page where people sign off on the QSAC, it's not all stakeholders. And while I am happy that the bargaining agent is involved, and there is a teacher involved, there are many more employees in the district just besides a teacher and administration. Where appropriate, there should be some student input. There is no place, I guess, in this process where the community has to sign off on this. That goes again to where it's a compliance exercise instead of an exercise to show improvement.

The other thing -- and the last thing I'll say, because a lot of people have been saying the same thing over and over again -- is I also think beyond the school district there needs to be a connection to community. Because all too often -- and again, I'm going back to our urban centers -- so much of what goes on in the community affects what's happening in school: poverty, nutrition, health, safety. There needs to be partnerships. For a school district to improve it needs to be a community effort. And I think any school district that's being -- putting forth an evaluation, a diagnostic plan has to demonstrate what they are doing to work with the community to overcome those issues. Because if we do not overcome those issues with

a partnership with the community, there is no way a school district or a school alone can do that.

So those are some of the things we're looking to do. We look forward to being part of the solution. And that's it.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you.

W E N D E L L S T E I N H A U E R: Hello. Wendell Steinhauer, President of NJEA. You have my testimony, so I'm going to scoot through it pretty quick for you.

The bottom line is, NJEA has always advocated for education policies and procedures to take into account the voices of educators and the residents of the communities they serve. I'm going to say that one more time, because I think that's a big key that's been missing in a lot of our takeover districts: the voices of the educators working in the schools and the residents of the communities they serve. They're on the frontlines of education -- they see what works, what doesn't, and how we can change things to make them work for students.

In our current climate, with its increased emphasis on accountability, it's really troubling that QSAC is a self-monitoring system that does not have a requirement for meaningful, sustained dialogue with teachers and other educators in the district. You've heard of the five areas discussed this morning. Let me address them individually.

First one, the instruction program portion of the evaluation has, unfortunately, become nothing more than over-reliance on tests and assessments. So if your students are not going to perform well on the tests, you are going to fail that section. In our State takeover districts, teachers often have to stop teaching the curriculum in a way that excites and inspires

students to learn more and, are, instead, directed to prepare kids to take a State test.

Consider the impact this has on our common goal of creating lifelong learners. Real learning comes from the thrill of exploring, analyzing, discovering, and creating. No test in the world -- no matter how technologically advanced -- could inspired this type of learning in our students.

The District Performance Review -- the DPR -- requires that only one teacher sign their name to it. Donna alluded to it; the local President. That's all that's needed to sign off. In a district like Jersey City or Newark with 50 to 75 buildings, requiring only one teacher to give input is grossly insufficient.

Under personnel we only need to look our Paterson school district as an example. The State has not been able to negotiate a successor agreement to the school's employee contract for more than four years. This has caused significant financial and emotional hardship for those school employees. It has led to staff turnover, low morale, and a sense that their district and, ultimately, their students are not really a priority for the State.

The third area, fiscal management evaluation, relies on such things as health and safety of the schools. However, the facilities in these State-controlled districts are not only woefully inadequate, but downright shameful. NJEA has worked with Healthy Schools Now, a coalition, to shed light on the shocking conditions of these schools. It's amazing to look at the scores of these school districts with pictures next to them. With their water damaged hallways, exposed pipes, and decrepit classrooms -- what

kind of a message does that send to our students, their parents, and our communities?

In the area of governance, the State needs to put more teeth into the State audits of the districts and recommendations of the auditor. Additionally, the State must build local capacity; in fact, this should be their number one priority.

What's ironic about this whole process in the State-run districts is that the State runs the districts, and they are holding the students and the community accountable for their failures. And even when a district makes a QSAC benchmark in four out of five categories, the State is reluctant to return the districts to local control. And one has to wonder why.

Twenty-five years is too long for these districts to be controlled by the State. I'm sure it was never the intention that this situation would continue this long. It's not what these communities want, and I'm confident it's not really what the State wants.

There has to be a better way, and here it is. Instead of simply paying lip service to building capacity in these communities, it's time to really engage the parents, community, and educators and develop a roadmap back, with strict timetables for them to regain control over the district. As you've seen from the reaction to the One Newark plan, parents and community members are eager to play a greater role in how their children are educated. They want to be a part of the conversation and the solution. What they need is the only thing that the State can provide: a seat at the table.

To sum up: What we need here is to stop the check-off lists and go back to what really works in education. It's not checking off the list to

make sure it's done. That's not going to get anything accomplished. What you need are the people who care about kids to be able to go in and make that difference. They're being shut out of the conversation.

Thank you.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you very much.

Next, I'm going to call up Dr. Donnie Evans, State District Superintendent for Paterson Public Schools; Mr. Joseph Jones, Superintendent of Woodbury City Public Schools; and Mr. Richard Kaplan, Superintendent of New Brunswick Public Schools.

D O N N I E W. E V A N S, Ed. D.: Thank you, Senator Ruiz, the Senator Education Committee members, and other Senators and representatives at the dais.

As noted in statute, the goal of New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum shall be to ensure that all districts are operating at a high level of performance. My first comment is to that goal. We've embraced that particular goal in our work in Paterson and, as a result, have reflected in our strategic plan and in all our efforts not only QSAC and its expectations and its standards, but our own expectations and standards.

Indeed, an item that should be distributed -- you may have a copy already -- is a copy of our Annual Report for the 2012-2013 school year that clearly demonstrates that we've taken seriously the expectations of QSAC; but the expectations of our community, our staff, myself as Superintendent, to ensure that our students are performing as best they can. And you will see, as representative of that information, significant improvements in student achievement because we have taken QSAC

seriously, and because we have taken our mission to prepare kids for college and careers very, very seriously.

My second point -- and I want to try and minimize my comments that represent a replication of something that has already been said, but it is worthy of mentioning anyway. My second point is the fact that there are issues with the process. We embrace QSAC -- let me be clear about that -- because of the high standards that are in it; and we are especially appreciative of the changes that were recently made -- to go from the 300-plus standards that were there to 50 or so standards we think represents tremendous progress. However, we feel more needs to be done.

And one of the areas that are a concern for us is the review process and, more specifically, the reviewers. We think the reviewers need to come equally prepared to analyze the information that we prepare for them, and not necessarily lend to it their own interpretation of whether or not a particular document or a particular data set indicates that we meet the standard. In fact, we've been challenged by that. We've had two different reviewers on occasion look at the same information and one would say, "Yes, this is evidence that you are meeting the standard," and another would say, "No, it's not."

And so preparing the reviewers, as they come in to view the information, in a way, obviously, that suggests that the validity and reliability is ensured in terms of not only what we prepare, but the interpretation that they lend to whether or not we meet the standard, is very, very important to us.

Secondly, principals work very hard -- particularly with site visits -- in helping to prepare. And we work hard at the District Office. We've had

variance, if you will, as it relates to that phase -- the actual site visits. In some cases, we've been afforded the opportunity of an exit interview, or an exit review, if you will, with us to give us a sense of what they saw -- and without necessarily passing final judgment on what the ratings are or are ultimately going to be. But at least let us know that you found what you were looking for in terms of information, regardless of how you rate it. That has not happened on occasion. And I would say that's important, particularly to principals who ask, "What did they find, what's happening with regards to the information I've provided?" Similarly at the District Office -- my staff at the District Office would like a similar kind of exit interview, again, so we'll know.

And then that's a segue into yet a third concern: the timing of the response. Someone has already mentioned that one, so I'll be brief with that one.

I'm entering my fifth year as Superintendent in Paterson. And during the past four-plus -- almost five years -- I have been subjected to four QSAC visits. And in those visits I don't know that we've gotten any of the information -- with the exception of, perhaps, the last visit -- back in a timely manner. It's taken months, and we wondered, "Did we do well, or did we not do well? Did we provide sufficient evidence to support meeting particular standards, or did we not?" Fortunately, in the last visit which occurred very recently, I did get a debriefing -- actually from the Commissioner, and I really appreciated that. And that was a first, actually -- a debriefing, actually sharing with me what I would have expected the people who visited to have shared with me, had we had an opportunity to sit with them.

Lastly, the issue of local control, and how you acquire local control if you are a State-controlled district continues to be a challenge for us. We are told that if we score above 80 points on the scales that are associated with each one of those DPR areas, and we do that for a number of visits -- and that's unclear as to how many -- the likelihood of us gaining control in that area is greater. We've scored above 80 in several of the indicators over the past three years, I believe. And still we're not there yet. And so I think more clarity is needed in the process -- how many times, and is the score 80 or above, meaning-- Well, I don't need to explain. You know what that means -- the 80 versus 100. We would like more clarity there.

Again, I commend the DOE staff and you as Legislators for approving the changes that have been made. We feel very good about those changes. And we support QSAC. I want to go on record as saying we support QSAC as a means, particularly in a district such as ours, that establishes high expectations. But then we, again, would like the courtesies that I've just suggested in my comments as well.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you.

J O S E P H J O N E S III: Good morning. I'm Joe Jones -- Joseph Jones -- from Woodbury City Public Schools, Gloucester County, Superintendent nine years. I'm finishing my ninth year there. I thought I was experienced with QSAC, but you beat me in your five years. I'm in cohort 1, which means that we were the first district after the pilots to get involved with this. And so we're currently completing our third official QSAC process in terms of the complete process with visitation.

I echo all of the comments that have been made today. I think that it's actually rather surprising how many of us can sit and nod our head in

agreement with the very many recommendations that are being made. They resonate in all types of districts across the state.

I am generally in favor of a process that allows for us to focus on checkpoints, and the Department's efforts to provide us those checkpoints does allow for that type of happening. In Rutgers University's Institute of Law and Policy study of the QSAC pilot districts back in 2006, administrators then were talking about the self-assessment process as being effective. It forced districts to critically assess themselves; it was empowering to identify their weaknesses rather than have an external body tell them where they were weak. It enabled honest reflection, and they also had the most intimate knowledge of the information available to make these assessments.

I agree with those statements, and I believe that it is still true today, that the internal review process associated with QSAC is most valuable and appropriate.

Woodbury has met with success each of the first two times through the process. We meet four out of the five areas. We gained the 80 percent threshold, or well beyond; and through the reevaluation process that is employed with QSAC, we were able to achieve the points necessary in instruction and program so that we could surpass that threshold and be deemed a high-performing district overall.

This year, as we completed our internal work back at the beginning of the year, we still await the County Office to finalize their process, and ultimately the Department of Ed has to sanction that as well. I expect that that report will come some time in the future. Interestingly, each time that we complete the review the overall process has varied. And this talks to my

colleague to my left here in terms of some of the methodologies employed by the reviewers. For our first QSAC, the County Office identified specific areas that they wanted to focus on, with their follow-up attention based upon what the County Superintendent and the educational specialists knew about the individual districts.

The second time around, the process was much more like the older format of monitoring that school districts went through -- at least it was for us in Gloucester County -- where all districts were asked to prepare the same voluminous hard copies of documentation just to justify the local scoring of the DPRs.

It does appear that this time around, the pendulum is starting to swing back the other way. But it's been a significant variance, time in and time out, as we go through the process.

The process works best when the County Office staff members conducting the review are well-acquainted with the work of your school district and your school personnel. When these individuals know the back stories associated with the efforts to increase student access to rigorous course work and the sustained professional development that takes place in your district, there is a stronger dialogue and trust that the process will be able to be a true, valuable internal district review that can be endorsed by the County Office with the oversight as it was originally envisioned.

Gloucester County has been lucky. Even though I had five County Superintendents change in my nine years as the Superintendent there at Woodbury, all of those individuals have attempted to know the District and the County well. And they've been supported by individuals with good knowledge of our work. Unfortunately, just recently Gloucester County has

been reorganized under a special pilot initiative to now operate under one Executive Regional Superintendent instead of the single Executive County Superintendent; and now the more common, I guess -- what we find is the shared Executive County Superintendent. But for now, Gloucester County -- the new arrangement has the Executive Regional Superintendent responsible for a large five-county region in South Jersey. The more removed the departments -- whether County or regionally based staff -- are from the schools, the more difficult a process it is; and it will be, for us, for then to verify our work. To accumulate documentation for strangers to your school district will be much more laborious than the work currently, where people know our work and what's happening in our districts.

In addition, I do want to highlight one other thing that was mentioned briefly. The QSAC document for instruction and program is heavily reliant on test scores. This is part of the redundancy factors that we have been hearing about. We are measured often by test scores. But here in this particular assessment, the test score in the instructional program becomes another problem for districts, especially those of us that may be serving in communities where-- The kids come to our school door in pre-school and kindergarten severely behind. So our work to improve their academic futures is measured by tests. And then these tests, in this document, becomes a third of the scores -- 33 out of 100 points in instructional program are test score-related.

In conclusion, I just want to say that I do value the opportunity to improve by having the State identify these key areas of compliance. The QSAC process has had some real value. The two concerns that I have are with the County and the State implementation at their level of oversight,

and heavy reliance on testing as a measure in the instruction program section.

Thank you.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you.

R I C H A R D M. K A P L A N: Senator Ruiz, members of the Senator Education Committee. My name is Richard Kaplan; I am the Superintendent of New Brunswick in Middlesex County. I am also the former first Director, Division of Compliance, under the Kean-Cooperman Administration. I'm older than Bari Erlichson. (laughter) I have your institutional memory for you and I'm going to go about it, and weave it, until you get it, I think. And I think that some of the Senator's comments are right on target.

So I'm the guy you can blame; I took over Jersey City and Paterson with a team of professionals that looked at the five governance (*sic*) -- the governance, the instruction, the personnel, the curriculum, and facilities. Those were the original five in 1986.

I was also the Auditor General. I'm also certified as a Superintendent, and I've been doing that a lot since 1990, and previous to coming into the Department in 1982.

So we were responsible for creating Level 3 monitoring. We had monitoring -- Levels 1 and 2 -- under thorough and efficient. And Bari's absolutely right: The number of items was 350 items that districts were looked at.

One day Commissioner Cooperman -- who was the Commissioner serving under Governor Kean -- asked a question. "Kaplan," and others, "What comes after two?" And I said, "Three," which was no earth

shattering surprise. But the surprise was the State had no exit. You had a Level 1 -- you did well, you didn't do well. You went into Level 2. And over time the concern by the Legislature, by the public, and certainly by the Governor and the Commissioner and the staff, was, "What's going on, because we are dollar one as a State in payment of public education." And I don't think that's gone down all that much.

So I'm going to give you a different perspective because I understood the State mission. The State mission was to say, "Help these children," because there was corruption in the school systems that were taken over. There was misappropriation of funds. People did go to jail. And from that, and over time, and over the changing -- the last 34 years -- various governors have come and gone, various legislators similarly have changed, and here's a biggie: The role of the Federal government in State and local education issues has grown and become encompassing. The one thing here in New Jersey that hasn't changed -- that you, the Legislature, in all those years of governors, have not changed -- is the Constitution. Because the Constitution of the State of New Jersey says education is a State responsibility. What are you going to do about it?

That responsibility is delegated to local districts to operate in conformance and compliance with State statutes that you and your colleagues in the Assembly vote on, approve, and governors sign. And those State statutes in conjunction -- where the State statute is not clear enough, then the Executive Branch -- through the Commissioner of Education and the State Board, promulgate rules and regulations, and have them endorsed and approved by the State Board and back down.

So New Jersey QSAC is similarly contained in NJSA 18A:7A-10, and the Administrative Code 6A:30-2.1 et seq through NJAC 30-9.1. Very busy bureaucracy, writing a lot of regulations. Because apparently, your statutes aren't clear enough for them. You only write regulations to clarify what the Legislative Branch has done.

To prepare for today's testimony, I had conversations with former Commissioners, including the one I served under. And I've learned a great deal about how the changes were made and what their goals were, in order to assure the Executive Branch, the Legislative Branch, and the New Jersey public that quality education is being offered our students.

"When New Jersey QSAC was conceived, the intent of the new monitoring system was to combine all monitoring systems, of which there were three, into one streamlined process that would apply to all schools. It was designed to access efficiently a district, and if the district was performing well then it would have more latitude and time before the next review. Alternatively, those districts not performing well would receive greater scrutiny and, if necessary, more support. Many of the people in the senior staff, including the Commissioner" -- and I'll tell you, that was Librera -- "who designed this system were no longer in the Department of Education when implementation was established."

Since that time, QSAC has become something quite different. In fact, it has become akin to the original T & E process designed in the mid-1970s that had grown to over 350 items to review.

However, New Jersey QSAC has been lapsed, but not withdrawn, by a simple waiver by the most recent outgoing Commissioner, who created the Regional Assessment Centers without legislation -- but merely by an

agreement and a waiver between the United States Department of Education and the Department of Education, utilizing Race to the Top funds. Also in the mix: changing by fiat the existence of the County Superintendent and the County Superintendent's roles as defined in the statute.

So before, when you talked about there are loads of different laws that are still on the books, I submit to you they need to be streamlined, reviewed, which ones you keep, which ones you don't. But it can't be done by yourselves; it can't be done by the Legislative Branch. It has to be done in a joint fashion, obviously with the Executive Branch and the Commissioner.

You know, the local districts have two masters right now, at least for evaluation: QSAC and the RAC. And the RAC is involved in reviewing the budget -- that was just recently required to be submitted. And as Lincoln so eloquently once said, "A house divided cannot stand." Now that we have a new Commissioner of Education designee -- who is a known New Jersey educator, a former Commissioner, Chief of Staff in the current Administration, and more importantly a practitioner and former Assistant Superintendent and Superintendent -- he knows that policy decisions and direction are important, but that implementation is the key to assuring its value and significance.

There is a broad review of legislative mandates and statutes that need to occur, much the same as when Chief of Staff (*sic*) Hesse ran his reformation review to end and recommend changing. That has to occur, and the time is now. The Chair mentioned -- I have it here for you -- the Chair mentioned governors come and go, legislators come and go, bills--

I've never seen too many deleted. And there are plenty of laws that argue with themselves. And then what happens is the bureaucrats decide which ones they're going to look at. And so my colleagues, to what they've said, I say ditto.

And you have to know something. New Brunswick, which is an Abbott District, or whatever we're calling us nowadays -- in 2009 we were in the very first cohort, because we were the guinea pigs -- all the Abbotts, under Commissioner Davy, we passed not only NCLB monitoring, but also QSAC monitoring. And we, too, got a high-performance district. The day I got the letter-- The next day I got a letter from Commissioner Davy saying we're going back into monitoring. And I told her it would take the New Jersey National Guard and State Police to get into New Brunswick. Because that was the most absurd thing I had ever seen in my life.

So here's my new one. Let me just tell you: personnel, 100 percent; operations, 100 percent; governance, 98 percent; fiscal management, 96 percent; instruction and program, 63 percent. Somebody -- I think it was Ms. Chiera -- said the bottom line: the what or the what? What are you going to look at, how are you going to do it? And what's the expectation of doing it, is really the important element -- not three, five, or seven. Because the Department, as you well know -- and you're going to deliberate the Governor's budget -- they don't have the resources to do it, they don't have the money to do it. They don't have the personnel to do it, and they don't attract and keep practitioners who know what schools are all about.

And the other point she made before, Senator Pou, is that when you start going down to the school level as if the district doesn't exist -- the whole picture -- and you avoid the Superintendent of Schools, and the

Board, and the direction -- that's known as dividing and conquering. That shall not stand because I am sure that every district that has had RAC in and out of them can tell you horror stories.

So this Regional Achievement Center is not working; is not working. But then again, you had nothing to do with it because this was done by a memo. So they went after the appointing authorities Title I funding. They went after Title I funding; they came up with a plan, Arne Duncan approved it, everybody approved it, and it went right around you. Think about that.

Thank you.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you very much.

Any questions?

Senator Pou.

SENATOR POU: Thank you; thank you, Madam Chair.

First of all, let me just thank you all for your comments.

I just want to pick up on something that you just said last, Dr. Kaplan. You mentioned a couple of things, and you go back to when it was first -- to your earlier years. With respect to the way the statute is outlined and the number of regulations that have come thereafter, it's my understanding that there's an Executive Committee that's been formed to try to take a look -- in terms of looking where we're at today, how things are being monitored and assessed with respect to not only just QSAC, but overall. Are you aware of what those findings are, and is that information being brought back to all of the members, all of the Superintendents throughout the state? Is there any progress or involvement in that? Are you aware of anything to that effect?

DR. KAPLAN: Not at all.

SENATOR POU: Interesting.

And let me just clarify why I asked that question. You said that many of the statutes were somewhat unclear to the Department of Education and the Commissioners, and that's why they didn't understand the intent of the legislation and they come up with all these regulations that outline beyond that of the scope of what the intended legislation is all about. Are you in the position to be able to provide to this Committee some of those particulars on how, what, and where those statutes-- How do those statutes compare to the regulations that are being formed? And what are some of the recommendations for eliminating some of those redundancies that we've been hearing about? How can we improve upon them? How can we even shorten the amount of steps and regulations that were assessed between the 350 so-called standards, versus the current 52? How can we improve upon that? And what can we do to shorten the opportunity to ensure that there is, indeed, an exit opportunity of returning many of your State-controlled school districts back to local control; or eliminating the redundancy of the paperwork from a three-year to a seven-year -- especially if you've been given the high-performance indicator that gives you the opportunity to do that?

Those are the kind of things that I'm sure, Madam Chair, would be extremely helpful to us; and that I know that the Chairwoman has been focusing on throughout her tenure to improve upon the educational system. But particularly making sure that the most important part is that our children are getting the best possible education. And that innovation, that is lost in a classroom because too much time is being spent on all-too-long-

lasting reports that are required, can go back into the classroom and have the creativity that our teachers clearly are able to do if given the time and opportunity.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you, Senator Pou.

Thank you all for your testimony. And again, yes I will remind everyone -- Senator Pou just echoed what I started the Committee hearing with -- that this is only the start. And obviously all of you have very -- specifics that you can share, and the Committee welcomes that ongoing process of open communication.

Lastly I will ask David Sciarra, Executive Director of the Education Law Center. And I want to thank you for your patience.

DAVID SCIARRA, ESQ.: Good morning, Senator Ruiz. It's a pleasure to be here. It's nice to see the members of the Committee again. And thank you for inviting me today to talk about the issue of State operation as it relates to QSAC.

I'm going to focus my comments not on a lot of the comments that were made previously about QSAC monitoring generally, and the DPRs and all of that. I'm going to really focus on the issue of the intersection of QSAC and State takeover.

And I come at this from having been here in 2005 -- in this very room, by the way -- where we were discussing with Commissioner Librera and legislators how to change the takeover law to, basically, come up with an exit strategy. Because at that time, if you'll recall, Paterson and Jersey City were into their second decade of State control; Newark was about to enter its second decade. And there was a lot of talk about how do we get a clear road map to achieve the sort of core mission of takeover, going back to

its original enactment, which was to have the State go into districts that are clearly and patently not providing a thorough and efficient education for their kids in a number of different ways; have the State collaboratively and cooperatively bring real resources to the table to get improvements; to get those improvements done as quickly as possible; and then to get out and return the district to local control. So that was the discussion back in 2005, and it turns out we're--

SENATOR RUIZ: Talking about the same thing.

MR. SCIARRA: Here we are, another 10 years later -- almost 10 years later.

SENATOR RUIZ: Just for the purpose of clarity, I was not the Chair of the Education Committee.

MR. SCIARRA: I know that. (laughter) I don't know if anyone was here. But I was there.

But 10 years later -- almost 10 years later we're talking about the same thing.

And I also had the experience of representing the community groups in Newark in the 2011 appeal of Commissioner Cerf's decision not to withdraw from fiscal, governance, and personnel when the District scored over 80. And so I draw upon that experience, because that was really a situation where we got into the Commissioner's discretion, the statute, what it provided, so forth and so on. So that really impacts upon what I'm going to say today.

So I want to just say that when QSAC was amended and QSAC came in -- and actually the State takeover law was amended in 2005 -- that's when the statute established the five areas for district evaluation; it

established a uniform set of performance indicators, as you've heard; and, more importantly, it established a score of 80 on those indicators as the definition of *satisfactory performance*.

And so what the statute did was that if you scored over 80, as you've heard, districts were -- in any one of these five areas -- you got a clean bill of health and there was no additional State action -- at least for the next three-year cycle. But if you scored under 80 you had to do an improvement plan and the district had to review that improvement plan on an ongoing basis.

Also the 2005 amendments altered takeover to integrate this. So if a takeover district scored over 80 in any particular area, the State was required-- The idea was, and the Legislature's intent was that the State would withdraw. Commissioner Davy, Commissioner Librera, and others have said that -- that once you scored over 80, we'll withdraw because the statute provided for what we called *partial withdraw*. You know, previously to that, it was an all-or-nothing approach. You had to score satisfactory in all the areas of monitoring in order for the State to exit.

The 2005 amendments fundamentally altered that by allowing for what we call *partial withdraw*. In other words, the idea was to start to return portions of the district back to local control if you scored over 80. The idea there was to give an incentive to the districts to improve, right? So if the districts knew that if they could get their scores up over 80, and they would then gain control of the area, that that would give them an extra incentive -- an extra boost in order to make the improvements they needed in order to get the district back to local governance.

It's important to remember that after the enactment of those amendments in 2005, the Corzine Administration actually implemented

these provisions the way they were intended. As you've heard from some of the superintendents, Jersey City scored a satisfactory and got several components of QSAC back: governance -- which is very important -- fiscal monitoring, and operations. In Newark, operations were returned in 2009 because they scored over 80 in that area.

And in 2011, I think as you've heard from Superintendent of Paterson, both Paterson and Newark were poised to get governance-- Well, in Newark it was governance, fiscal, and personnel; and in Paterson it was governance,, as Superintendent Evans just said, because they scored over 80. And I worked with the Chairman of the Newark Board, Shavar Jeffries, and the Newark Advisory Board to get those scores up over 80, because the understanding was that if we score over 80 the State will leave and we'll get control back.

Well, that didn't happen. And I have to tell you that when those 2005 amendments were adopted, no one could have foreseen what occurred when Governor Christie took office. Instead of working collaboratively with the districts to improve and quickly exit, the Governor instead has utilized State takeover to maintain control. His stated objective, which is to advance his own preferred educational reforms -- such as expansion of charter schools, merit pay, so forth and so on, even the waiver that Newark just recently applied to get out from under tenure -- and to use State operation as a means to advance his particular education agenda.

And don't take it from me. The Governor said it himself when he stood in Newark in March of 2011 and said that no matter what the District scores on QSAC -- Newark scores on QSAC--

SENATOR RUIZ: Mr. Sciarra, I'm living it, right? So I'm a Newark resident, and I'm living it. I just want to be sure you have very compelling testimony, to really clean up and move forward.

MR. SCIARRA: Okay.

SENATOR RUIZ: I don't want to get caught up in what one Administration said, because I've been witnessing this since Davy was there -- when we were supposed to get out of certain capacities. I really want to use this Committee as a positive force to look at a problem that we have here, one that has been a problem since -- you're echoing -- 2005. And I think that you have very clear strategies as to how we can clean up statute.

MR. SCIARRA: Well, thank you, Senator. But I just do want to say that there was a fundamental shift in the use of State control when this Administration took office that we have to take into account. And it drives a number of the recommendations I'm going to make. That's the only point I wanted to make.

SENATOR RUIZ: Okay.

MR. SCIARRA: So let me get to those recommendations.

In order to deal with this situation now -- and particularly given this Administration's handling of QSAC and State takeover -- there are a number of amendments that are urgently needed.

The first is that we have to have the QSAC monitoring of State-operated districts performed by an independent entity. We've learned through the last experience -- particularly with Commissioner Cerf's refusal to withdraw -- that the State-- We simply can't have a situation where the State is monitoring and evaluating its own performance in running the schools in a particular community. There is an inherent conflict of interest

and no one -- no one in those communities -- has any trust, as I am sure you understand, Senator Ruiz, the State's monitoring of its own performance. There was a recommendation initially back in 2005 that an independent do monitoring when districts are under State control, to get that conflict of interest out from under that. I think we need to go back to that. Our recommendation is that the DOE should be required to issue an RFP for an independent entity; obtain approval of the Joint Committee on the Public Schools before selecting that outside evaluator; and let the outside evaluator conduct both the comprehensive three-year evaluations and the six-month progress reviews of district improvement plans.

The second recommendation goes to something that I think that we've already heard: 80 means 80. If you score over 80 the State's got to get out. What Commissioner Cerf did was he used some wiggle room in there about sustained progress in order to say, "Well, even if you scored over 80 we don't think you've scored over 80 enough times and, therefore, we're not going to exit."

SENATOR RUIZ: I have a question on that.

Today I'm dropping a bill that would do precisely that in its immediacy, because I figured that was one of the cleanest things that we can do. In retrospect and just thinking -- and I'm sure that the districts that have-- We should have a conversation to -- if a district shows it in two years -- so that it's showing it in two years, and not only one, so that we don't see a downturn or an upturn in specific areas. But the bill that I'm dropping today would comply with your number two recommendation. I'm just hoping that we can have longer conversations about that to ensure that its progress that seems steady and not in a short term.

MR. SCIARRA: Right. Look, the other thing I think you just need to do with that -- I think 80 should be the point at which-- On the comprehensive evaluation, it's the comprehensive evaluation -- the three-year evaluation -- you score over 80 on that, you should get out. What Commissioner Cerf did -- which I think was unauthorized by law -- was to take the progress reviews of the improvement plans -- which undergo six-month reviews during that three-year cycle -- and then score those and say, "Well, you know, you scored over 80 on the comprehensive evaluation. But now we've come in a year later, or six months later, and you know, we think the scores might be a little bit lower so, therefore, we're not going to let you out."

So the issue is, if you score over 80 on the comprehensive three-year evaluation cycle, they should get out. The other thing you could put in that bill that I would recommend is -- look, the State is the State, right? The State's not going anywhere. Put in the bill that if the State has any concerns on follow up, put that they can go back in even if you score over 80. In these situations do another review to make sure--

SENATOR RUIZ: No--

MR. SCIARRA: --and provide help.

SENATOR RUIZ: It was made clear that it is on the comprehensive review which shows steady-- Three years should be enough.

MR. SCIARRA: I think that's plenty.

SENATOR RUIZ: Okay.

MR. SCIARRA: I would endorse that.

SENATOR RUIZ: Okay, thank you.

MR. SCIARRA: Now, the other thing that's important is that you have to also put in-- I don't know if you have it in this bill, but there has to be a revision of the-- There needs to be a timeframe as to when you get out if you score over 80. I'll give you a real-life example. Newark scored over 80 in fiscal monitoring in its comprehensive 2011 review. Commissioner Cerf refused to exit. We went to court. When we argued the case in front of the Appellate Division, the Attorney General stood up and said, "Well, look, we're going to withdraw from fiscal -- not governance and personnel -- because the subsequent six-month progress review showed that they continued to score over 80." There was just simply no justification at that point, since the District had demonstrated on a number of occasions in fiscal that it was 80.

Here we are today. That was June 2013 when the Attorney General stood up and told the judges and represented to the Appellate Court that we're getting out of fiscal. It still hasn't been returned. The District is still waiting. I get e-mails from the Advisory Board Chair that the Department is dragging its feet.

So you've got to put a deadline. I would suggest three months -- and I would include governance in that as well -- that within three months of scoring over 80 in a comprehensive evaluation, that's it. It goes back to the Advisory Board; it goes back to the local District. So you have to put a time limit on that, otherwise-- Well, see what we're doing now, we're just spinning around while the Commissioner takes his time in order to actually give the area back -- now coming on a year later.

The other point I want to make about this is the six-month progress reviews of districts that are-- And this pertains not to just to State districts,

but all districts that have to do corrective action plans because their -- improvement plans -- because their score in a particular area is under 80. The statute needs to be clarified that the Commissioner needs to go in, do these six-month progress reviews, and those progress reviews should really be about not re-scoring again, but what do we need to-- Where are they, and what kinds of additional assistance we have to bring to bear to get their score up over 80 by the next comprehensive evaluation cycle. So we need to change the nature, clarify that progress reviews are simply that: progress reviews. And they don't do what Commissioner Cerf does, which is to use the progress reviews to re-score on the DPRs all over again mid-stream.

The second thing is that the six-month progress reviews -- you need to put at least a one-month time limit on the issuance of a letter or a finding as to what you found on those six-month progress reviews. Here's why I mention that. Newark had its last six-month progress review a year ago -- over a year ago now -- January 2013. I have been asking the Attorney General, asking the Commissioner, asking anybody at the Department of Education: When is the letter going to be issued to the Newark Advisory Board and the community as to what the results of that six-month progress review are? Here we are a year later, and the Department doesn't even have the courtesy to tell the community how you did on a progress review of your corrective plan over a year ago? That's just simply -- Senator, I have to say this -- unconscionable, and a complete disrespect. And if you want to talk about building trust -- that just breaks down the trust.

And the last note I got from the Attorney General was, "Well," I got it, you know, "Well, Commissioner Cerf's going to get it out." The last note I just got the other day about this was he said, "Well, we have a new

Commissioner coming in and we're going to have to wait." So that shouldn't be allowed. We have to clean that whole process up in the statute.

The role of the Advisory Board also has to be clarified. Look, the Advisory Board-- I've been to Advisory Board meetings in a number of State-operated districts over the years. They only operate differently. Paterson, the Advisory Board votes; it acts like a regular board. The only difference is that the State Superintendent has -- the way I read the statute -- the right to veto whatever vote the Advisory Board takes. In Newark -- well, they don't even have Advisory Board meetings anymore because the State Superintendent won't even show up. But putting that aside, you know, sometimes they vote, sometimes they don't, right? In Camden, I'm told, the new Advisory Board -- they don't vote on anything. Essentially, the new State Superintendent comes out and tells them, "This is what we're doing, have a nice day," and that's the end of it. That's not the way Advisory Boards that don't have governance back -- Jersey City is different, because they have governance back -- but if an Advisory Board doesn't have governance back, the statute needs to be clarified that they should operate like a regular Board of Education -- exactly. They should vote on everything. The only difference is, is that the State Superintendent has veto power. That's it. And we have to clear up this inconsistent way in which Advisory Boards in these State-operated districts are operating.

You already have-- And I commend the Chairwoman for your legislation on closing schools. That should be an exemption even in an Advisory Board that doesn't have governance. That is such an impactful decision. There are certain decisions I would argue -- this being one of them

-- where even an Advisory Board that doesn't have governance ought to be able to vote on it. And, again, I commend the Senator for her bill which would allow Advisory Boards that don't have governance to vote on whether or not to close a school, sell a school -- something like that.

The other issue with charter schools that really gets under my craw is that if you're in a regular district, the charter school application goes to the Board and the Superintendent; they get to file comments on whether to have it or not. In a State-operated district, the State Superintendent gets the charter school application. There's no requirement that the State Superintendent actually share that with the Board. I mean, maybe they might, maybe they won't. I know in Newark, she doesn't. So the Board really doesn't know, and therefore the community doesn't know, which charter school -- if there's a charter school application that's been filed, and given the opportunity to comment.

We have to clear this up. And this is particularly important because we discovered now, in Newark, where all of a sudden charter schools have been approved to open or approved to expand and nobody knows about it. Because the only person who knew about it was the State Superintendent, and she didn't tell anybody because she wasn't required to -- or he wasn't required to.

So we need to get a handle on this, right? So if a charter school-- If there's a new application for a charter school -- and I would include in that if there is an application by a charter school to amend its charter to expand enrollment, or to do a satellite campus-- Because one of the things we need to understand about this Administration's handling of the charter school laws is that they've changed the regulations so that you can, in affect, open

up a new school by amending your existing charter, which I don't think is allowed. But let's put that aside for the moment. We need to make sure that any charter school application goes not just to the State Superintendent, but to the Advisory Board, and that the Advisory Board has the ample opportunity to comment on it.

Now, this is why this is important to Newark right now. Here's why I'll tell you. One of the main reasons the State Superintendent is proposing her new plan is because -- and they've said it, right? -- the explosive growth of charters. And I'm not arguing against charters, but just the explosive growth of charters approved without, really, anybody knowing is causing a huge budget gap. Because the amount of money that's going to charters is rising dramatically because-- It caused almost a \$50 million budget gap last year; I'm told it's going to be up over \$50 million this year because so much money has to go out, off the top, to the charter schools. And who suffers? The kids in the district schools. Because the only place the Superintendent can go to cut the budget in a place like Newark, where charters take up so much of the budget now, is on district-run schools. So there was an \$18 million cut in school-based budgets in schools run by the Newark District last year.

The Supreme Court in the Montclair decision in December reaffirmed that the Commissioner has a responsibility -- constitutional responsibility, above and beyond the charter school law, that before approving any application or expansion of charter school enrollment it has to assess the impact that that is going to have on the funding available to kids in the district schools -- and the segregative effects too, by the way.

So this is why we have to get the Advisory Boards that don't have governance deeply engaged in the issue of-- We have to provide them a clear mechanism for them to be deeply engaged in the issue of whether we're going to open new charter schools or expand them, because they have such a huge impact now on some of these districts -- on their resources that are available to the kids who are left in the district-run schools.

I would also amend the Urban Hope Act to give the Advisory Board voting authority on renaissance schools.

And lastly, I think we need an amendment that clarifies the standards under which the State should undertake *full intervention* -- as it's called under the statute -- full State control of a district in the first instance. You know, the problem with the Camden takeover that I had was that the State really had been around, more or less, kind of running the District de facto for a number of years through a hybrid board. If any of you were around, there was a hybrid board that we put in, in the Camden Recovery Act, and so forth and so on. There's a Fiscal Monitor there who has been there for 10 years. My office is filled with reports on State audits, and so forth and so on, yet their QSAC scores never went up.

And so, all of a sudden now, the Administration goes and decides to take over. What it did not have to demonstrate, and it ought to be required to demonstrate, is that State takeover -- full State intervention is a last resort -- we have to come up with some language -- a very last resort when no other alternative is available. And in the order to show cause that the State has to apply to take a district over under the statute, the Commissioner should be required to lay out in great detail all the steps that the State has taken to date to get the district to improve. Because, you

know, when-- Under QSAC now, the good news is when the State, like in Camden, decided to take over the District, it wasn't like Superintendent Kaplan said back in 1980 -- whatever it was -- 1989 -- I forget how long ago -- the State is deeply involved in these districts anyway, through the RACs, through the this, through the that, right? So the low-performing schools, the priority schools, all these things -- auditing -- most of these-- Camden had a Fiscal Monitor, which is a form of State intervention over the budget. They control the budget, and so forth and so on.

So this isn't like, "Oh, all of a sudden we've found a problem. Let's go in." There's a track record of State involvement in these districts that's deep and long. And it seems to me that the Commissioner has to be obligated to demonstrate that they've done everything that they can, used every effort, the resources they've provided, the steps they've been providing, and they've gotten to the point where they just can't work with the district anymore. And as a last resort -- as a last resort -- they're going to engage in the extreme step of basically disenfranchising the local community from its schools and, more importantly, operating from Trenton the educational process, if you will -- the education delivery system for thousands of kids in poor communities. So that really needs to be clear.

So I'll stop there. That's a lot of amendments, and I appreciate your allowing me the time to go through them.

But I think these-- And the Chairwomen's amendment on the score of 80 right away would be--- Let's move that. That's one thing we can do right now, clear it up. You know, the important thing I learned from this litigation we did in Newark was that the District now, I can tell you, the Advisory Board -- I talked to the Advisory Board people in these districts.

Even Paterson, because Paterson scored over 80, they did the same thing: they appealed. But because of this wiggle room about substantial and sustained progress the court said, "Well, you know, we'll let it go," right? That has to be cleaned up because here's what's happening -- here's what happens. The Advisory Board members and the community just give up. They just say, "Look, no matter what we do--" I've heard this from Advisory Board members in Newark; even the former Chairperson Jeffries told me, "We did all this work to get up over 80, and it didn't matter. What's the point? No matter what we do, the Commissioner is going to do what he wants."

Now you can't run it that-- It's not-- And I'm just telling you, if we continue down this path, we're not going to get the improvements we want because the community is going to be so distrustful, so alienated, so angry -- and particularly when you're talking about districts that have been under State control for 20 years -- more than 20 years. You're just not going to get the kind of improvements we all want to see and the kind of collaborative, cooperative relationships between the State, the district, the principals, the community that you have to have.

So it's time to really end this. I'm prepared to work with you and your Committee to get these amendments together. We'll be there to support your amendment on clarifying the satisfactory scores.

And I want to thank you all for having me today.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you, David.

I want to thank everyone who provided testimony. I look forward to continuing receiving information. Obviously this was just a start of a conversation. There are many areas where I'm sure that the professionals

and stakeholders have very specific comments that they can forward to us as we begin to do this.

QSAC is just one piece. If in fact this Committee undertakes a State takeover law review, we certainly have to look at some of the things that were talked about today -- and that's benchmarks for both the districts and the State. Who is responsible, who's meeting it, and how are we working in a collaborative fashion to get there?

It is unfortunate that there has been tumultuous and epic sentiment across the State takeover districts that is really now, I think, compelling all of us to put all hands on deck to ensure that we rewrite statute to meet today's needs.

So I want to say thank you to everyone.

And that concludes today's Committee meeting.

(MEETING CONCLUDED)

APPENDIX

Testimony to the Senate Education Committee
Monday, March 24, 2013
Charles B. Sampson
Superintendent of Schools
Freehold Regional High School District

NJQSAC remarks

Thank you Chairwoman Ruiz and members of the Senate Education Committee for allowing me the opportunity to provide testimony regarding the New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum. I know that we all realize the importance of ensuring that an accountability system that serves as a tool to validate, support and, when necessary, question the organizational capacity and effectiveness of a public school system is an important component to guaranteeing a vibrant education for all of New Jersey's students. For the past three years I have served as the Superintendent of the Freehold Regional High School system, a high performing school district encompassing six high schools and serving approximately 11,600 students located in Monmouth County. I also serve as the Treasurer of the Garden State Coalition of Schools, representing over 80 school districts across the state.

QSAC, as currently constructed is designed to measure organizational effectiveness in five broad categories including Instruction and Program, Fiscal Management, Governance, Personnel and Operations. QSAC monitoring includes an intensive district self-study followed by a site visitation that occurs every three years. I would like to posit today that the current legislation sponsored by Senator Bateman (S135) and Senator Kean (S721), extending the QSAC cycle beyond three years, would benefit high performing school districts and limit redundancy in reporting requirements for New Jersey's public schools. Extending the timeline for the QSAC process makes good sense as significant components of QSAC are provided to the state and federal authorities in other venues. Moving beyond the scope of the three year monitoring window would alleviate unnecessary bureaucracy, allowing a more efficient use of administrative time allowing school district leaders to focus on what truly matters- student outcomes.

In my three years as Superintendent of the Freehold Regional High School District our school district has undergone significant monitoring including : consolidated sub grant monitoring that examined various elements of our title I, title II, career and technical, IDEA, and special education programs and consisted of no less than 12 DOE officials spending parts of four days in our district, a survey audit for post-secondary students with disabilities; a specific title I audit; QSAC in January 2013 and an audit of our home instruction and alternative education programs by the office of the state auditor. Additionally, we have presented an annual testing report to the public, undergone an annual financial audit, and presented our violence and vandalism numbers twice each year, this year including our HIB grade. We have also submitted or will submit extensive data to the state in preparation for AchieveNJ through NJSMART including staff certification data and graduation cohort data. Our mid-year budget reviews with the county office have necessitated an explanation of how and what resources are being deployed to various initiatives including the Common Core, PARCC testing and our new teacher evaluation mandates. Finally, we have continued our Middle States accreditation throughout this cycle with midyear visitations and the beginning of a self-study for district accreditation. I share this with you because a great deal of the data required within all of the above mentioned occurrences is duplicated within QSAC. The fiscal management component of QSAC encompasses much if not all of the work done in preparation for the annual audit. The operations category contains requirements regarding violence and vandalism. The instruction and program category contains graduation data, and information regarding curriculum development aligned to the common core that is submitted to the state in other

venues. The personnel component of QSAC is now captured almost entirely within NJSMART. In one extreme example, one of the categories in QSAC is to print and present a screenshot from an NJSMART submission that demonstrates reporting deadlines with fewer than 2% error. Certainly this data is already available to the state. Given this significant overlap, an extension of the QSAC timelines beyond three years, particularly for school districts already designated as high performing and a thorough examination that builds upon the recommendations of the 2011-2012 Education Task Force would be advantageous to schools across the state.

Indeed with the advent of an entirely new system of student assessment with PARCC, it might be time to rethink QSAC entirely to identify core metrics as indicators of organizational health and effectiveness that focus on student outputs. With the rapid expanse of NJSMART, introduction of new performance reports and new systems of evaluating and monitoring staff and student achievement, QSAC, even with the revisions adopted in 2012, has become a dated tool that fails to most effectively gauge the broad range of avenues that school systems may provide to engender student success. The extensions called for in S135 and S721 would allow for the opportunity to explore ways to make QSAC more effective in assisting school districts in focusing on student outcomes.

Milton Chen stated that modern learning necessitates the utilization of modern tools. The compliance checklist nature of QSAC ignores more authentic indicators of a successful school system and overly burdens districts that have repeatedly performed at the highest levels. As we reset the playing field to incorporate the new mandates as established by state and federal authorities, we should look also to develop a new tool that recognizes the distinctions and nuanced differences amongst public schools while providing metrics of growth not found in other reports already provided by school districts in other reporting requirements. I am heartened that there seems the possibility on some real movement regarding the QSAC process and would welcome the opportunity to contribute to the determination of a more modern tool to support and validate modern learning.

Testimony to the Senate Education Committee

Committee Room 6

1st Floor of the State House Annex

Monday, March 24, 2014 at 10:00 am

Jorden Schiff, Ed.D

Superintendent of Schools

Hillsborough Township Board of Education

Chairwoman Ruiz and members of the Senate Education Committee, it is my honor and pleasure to give testimony today regarding the New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum, commonly known as QSAC. My name is Dr. Jorden Schiff and I am the proud superintendent of the Hillsborough Township Public Schools. Located in Somerset County, Hillsborough is a High Performing prek-12 district with nine schools, 1200 employees, 7,300 students, and an annual budget of close to \$110 million. I have served as superintendent since January of 2011 and have completed one full QSAC cycle. Prior to Hillsborough, I served as superintendent of the Readington Township Public Schools for over four years and completed two cycles of QSAC monitoring.

The Department of Education plays a critical role in monitoring local districts to ensure that administration and the Board of Education are following all state laws and regulations. When a district fails to meet the "High Performing" standard of QSAC, additional monitoring and corrective action is necessary. Districts that fail to provide a rigorous curriculum, high fiscal management standards, proper personnel procedures, and appropriate governmental oversight must be closely monitored by the Department of Education, in order to make certain the students are well served.

I have had the privilege to work in High Performing districts where the QSAC process is taken very seriously. Our process begins with a self-assessment in the areas of Instruction and Program, Fiscal Management, Governance, Personnel, and Operations. Documents are then cross-checked against the performance indicators or DPR's (District Performance Review). These documents are then shared with a committee of individuals representing the teachers, parents, Board, and administration who determine whether the district could document the DPR adequately. I then review the work of the committees and certify the self-evaluation. The Executive County Superintendent, Business Administrator, and the Education Specialist from the County Office completes a site visit and determines the accuracy of the self-evaluation by reviewing documents, interviewing staff, and inspecting the facilities.

Although this is important work, it does consume many hours of local staff's time and the county office's time, as well. I am concerned that the frequency, every three years, is not necessary for "High Performing Districts." If a district performs well through the QSAC monitoring process, then the district should be able to be monitored every seven years, rather than every three years. The time that local

districts spend every three years preparing for monitoring could be better spent focusing on the teaching and learning process. The Executive County Superintendent's office could better focus on needy districts, rather than monitor High Performing Districts every three years. The County Superintendents are now responsible for multiple counties when a few short years ago were responsible for only one county. With many more districts falling under fewer county superintendents, it becomes critical that their time be spent where it is needed most, with districts who struggle to meet the QSAC DPR's.

There is a bill, however, that is currently making its way through the legislative process that will positively address this concern. Senator Bateman's bill, S135, permits high performing school districts to be monitored by the DOE every seven years rather than every three years. This common sense legislation recognizes that not all districts need to be painted with such a broad brush. High Performing districts could spend more time with their students and less time documenting compliance, while the county offices could focus their scarce time on the districts needing their assistance the most.

Once again, I appreciate your time and attention, and I look forward to your questions.

**NJEA President Wendell Steinhauer
Testimony to the Senate Education Committee
March 24, 2014**

Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to testify today about New Jersey's Quality Single Accountability Continuum process and the impact that it has had and is having on students and school employees in affected districts.

NJEA has always advocated for education policies and procedures that take into account the voices of educators and the residents of the communities they serve. After all, they are on the front lines of education. They see what works, what doesn't, and how we can change things to make them work for students.

In the current climate, with its increased emphasis on accountability, it is troubling that QSAC is a self-monitoring system that does not have a requirement for meaningful, sustained dialogue with teachers and other educators in the district.

Under QSAC, school districts are evaluated and scored in five areas: effectiveness (specifically instruction and program), personnel, fiscal management, operations and governance.

The instruction and program portion of the evaluation has unfortunately become nothing more than an over-reliance on tests and assessments. In our state takeover districts, teachers often have to stop teaching the curriculum in a way that excites and inspires students to learn more and are instead directed to prepare kids to take a state test.

Even the measures to ensure the Core Curriculum Content Standards are being followed are based on tests.

Consider the impact this has on our common goal of creating lifelong learners. Real learning comes from the thrill of exploring, analyzing, discovering, and creating. No test in the world, no matter how technologically advanced, could inspire this type of learning in our students.

The District Performance Review or DPR, requires that only one teacher sign their name to it. In a district like Jersey City or Newark with 50-75 buildings, requiring only one teacher to give input is grossly insufficient.

And the QSAC monitoring teams do not come in on a regular basis and in some cases not for several years.

In the area of personnel one need only look at our Paterson School District as an example. The state has not been able to negotiate a successor agreement to the

school employees' contract for more than four years. This has caused significant financial and emotional hardship for those school employees. It has led to staff turnover, low morale, and a sense that their district – and ultimately their students – are not a priority for the state.

The fiscal management evaluation relies on such things as health and safety of the schools. However, the facilities in these state-controlled districts are not only woefully inadequate, but downright shameful.

NJEA worked with Healthy Schools Now, a coalition of parents, educators, students, and public school advocates, to shed light on the shocking conditions in some of our schools. I'm sure you've seen some of the pictures from Camden, Newark, and other districts: water-damaged hallways, exposed pipes, and decrepit classrooms.

What kind of a message does that send to our students, their parents, and our communities?

In the area of governance, the state needs to put more teeth into the state audits of the district and recommendations of the auditor. Additionally, the state **MUST** build local capacity. In fact, this should be their number one priority.

What is ironic about this whole process in state run districts is that the state *runs the districts*, and they are holding the students and the community accountable for their failures.

Even when a district meets the QSAC benchmarks in all five categories, the state is reluctant to return the district to local control. One has to wonder why.

Twenty-five years is too long for these districts to be controlled by the state. I'm sure it was never the intention that this situation would continue this long. It is not what these communities want and I'm confident it's not really what the state wants.

There has to be a better way – and there is.

Instead of simply paying lip service to building capacity in these communities, it's time to really engage the parents, community, and educators and develop a road map back with strict timetables for them to regain control over their schools.

As you've seen from the reaction to the One Newark plan, parents and community members are eager to play a greater role in how their children are educated. They want to be part of the conversation – and the solution.

What they need is the one thing that only the state can provide: a seat at the table.

Thank you.

BRIGHT FUTURES

Transforming Paterson Public Schools



ANNUAL REPORT

July 2012 – June 2013

PATERSON PUBLIC SCHOOLS 
Preparing All Children for College and Career



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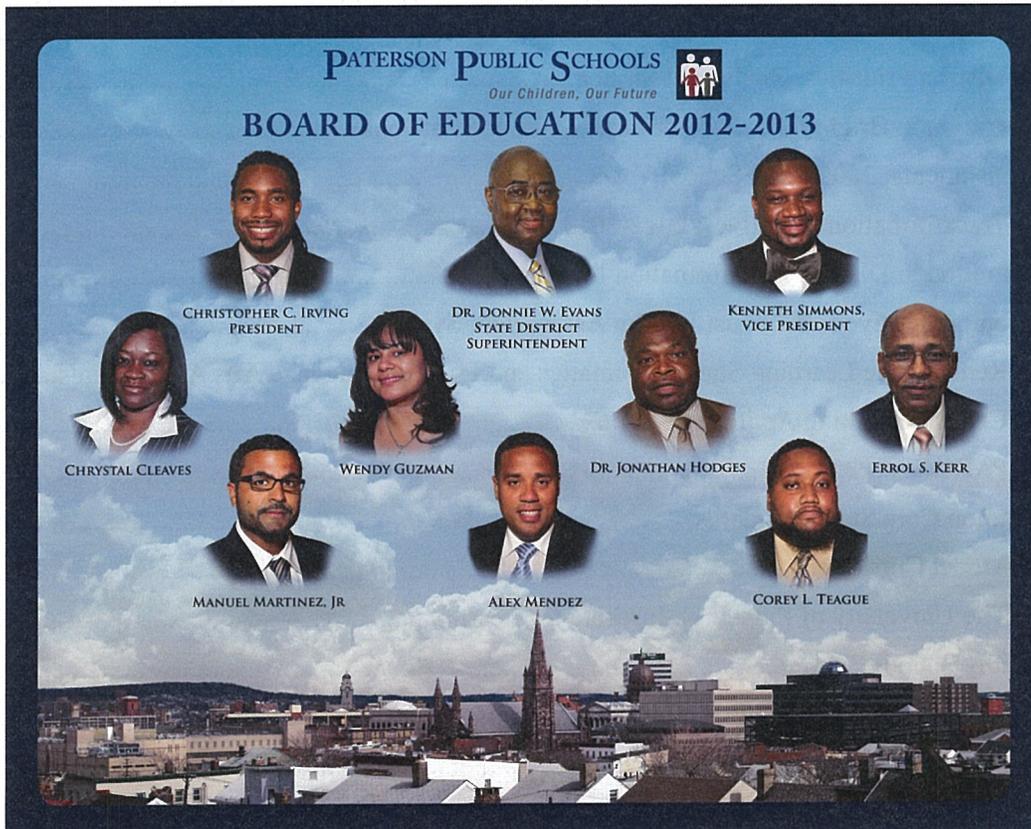
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BRIGHT FUTURES

PATERSON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

ANNUAL REPORT

2012 - 2013

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Introduction

Located outside of New York City, Paterson is the third largest city in the state of New Jersey. Originally established for its proximity to the Passaic Great Falls, Paterson became one of the first industrial centers in the United States. In fact, Paterson became known as the “Silk City” because of its dominant role in silk production in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Today, this historic city has a highly diverse population of 146,000.

The Paterson Public School District

Educating Paterson’s youth is the function of the Paterson Public School District. With more than 40 languages spoken in its classrooms, it is one of New Jersey’s most diverse school districts. This urban district enrolls 25,000 students in grades kindergarten through twelve and an additional 2,900 pre-kindergarten students with community providers. Its 54 schools are largely configured as pre-K, K-8, and 9-12 with a small number configured as grades K-4, pre-K-5 or 6-8. The district, one of four that is state-operated, has been managed by the New Jersey Department of Education since 1991 because of its previous fiscal mismanagement and poor student achievement.

More than ninety percent of district students receive free or reduced priced lunches. Fifteen percent or 3,500 students receive special education services and thirteen percent of students are English Language Learners (ELL) who receive bilingual/ESL services.

The student population in the Paterson district mirrors the trend of urban communities across the nation and in New Jersey. Sixty percent of its students are of Hispanic origin, thirty percent are African-American, and approximately nine percent are of Caucasian, Middle Eastern or Asian descent. Nearly fifty percent of all students in Paterson speak a primary language other than English, with over 40 languages spoken in district schools. Its diversity among residents and the students enrolled in the district is an asset. The city’s population has included residents from numerous cultural and ethnic orientations since its inception. The rich diversity in the school district provides an opportunity for students to learn firsthand about other cultures and develop an appreciation for similarities and differences as they prepare for success in a multicultural world.

Illustration 1: Paterson Public Schools Demographic Profile

		Number in District	Percent of District Population
	Total Student Enrollment*	24,567	
Ethnicity	Black	6,755	27.5%
	Hispanic	15,325	62.4%
	White	1,400	5.7%
	Asian	1,050	4.3%
	American Indian/Alaskan Native	21	<1%
	Hawaiian Native/Pacific Islander	16	<1%
Gender	Female	11,945	48.6%
	Male	12,622	51.3%
Economic Status	Free and Reduced Lunch	22,623	92%
Special Populations or Programs	Limited English Proficient (no pre-K students)	3,537	14.3%
	Special Education (Includes 145 in-district pre-K students)	3,342	13.6%
	In-District Preschool	375	
	Out-Of-District Preschool	3,180	
Staff	Total Instructional and Non-Instructional Staff	5,535	
	Instructional	2,862	51.7%
	Non-Instructional (includes substitutes)	2,673	48.2%

* Does not include pre-K



Executive Summary

During the summer and fall of 2009, the district developed *Bright Futures: A Strategic Plan for the Children of Paterson*. Guided by a vision to be a leader in educating the state's urban youth and a mission to prepare all its students for college and career, the district began a journey to transform itself. During the next four years it implemented an array of school and district improvement strategies and initiatives to accomplish the Plan's twenty three goals.

For the 2012-2013 school year, the district identified seven transformation objectives aligned with *Bright Futures* and developed a system-wide plan to further sharpen its focus. The objectives were intended to build healthy school cultures, redesign critical processes and procedures, build capacity among staff at all levels, implement a robust assessment system, develop a performance-based teacher and administrator evaluation system, implement high impact academic interventions for low performing students, and implement the new State Common Core Standards. Research-based strategies and interventions implemented to meet these objectives have resulted in improvements in academic and process outcomes, including:

- The district's graduation rate using the cohort method for the 2013 graduating class grew to 72.1% as compared to 66.4% in 2012, 64.3% in 2011 and 50.4% in 2010.
- The district has achieved its highest score ever for first-time takers of the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) with increases in proficiency for both language arts literacy (LAL) and mathematics.
- HSPA LAL scores grew from 59.5% in 2011 to 66.4% in 2012 to 71.8% in 2013 with 88.6% of general education students at or above proficient.
- HSPA mathematics scores have increased from 30.9% in 2011 to 46.6% in 2012 to 49.7% in 2013 with 60.7% of general education students at or above proficient.
- Percentage of graduates who have been accepted to and plan to attend a 2 or 4 year college/university has grown to 70.8% in 2013 from 55.9% in 2011.
- The percentage of students in Grades 3-8 performing at or above proficient in language arts increased from 35.5% in 2010-11 to 40.1% in 2012-13, from 49.1% to 52% in mathematics and from 58.7% to 61.2% in science.
- The district's average daily attendance rate for elementary students has increased from 93% in 2011-12 to 94.6% in 2012-13 which included a 3.8% increase in our high schools from 85.2% to 89%.

For the 2013-2014 school year and beyond, the district will continue to implement research-based school improvement practices and strategies that will continue to generate increased outcomes while sustaining current increases. It will also address other critical areas in need of improvement including its Special Education and English Language Learners programs, updating and revising the strategic plan, maintaining fiscal stability, and developing a long-term facilities plan.

Bright Futures: The Strategic Plan for Paterson Public Schools 2009-2014

Overview

Vision and Mission

The City of Paterson and the Paterson Public Schools possess enormous strength and much potential. In addition to the positive attributes noted earlier, present in the city is a strong entrepreneurial spirit; robust and post secondary institutions; resourceful community organizations and faith institutions; and a strong will to rise above its challenges. This gave rise to the development of the district's vision to become a state leader in educating urban youth supported by a college ready mission to prepare all students to be successful in the college or university of their choosing and in their chosen career.

Supporting the vision and mission are the following core beliefs:

- The core business of schools and the school district is teaching and learning, which drive all decisions and activities in the district;
- All children can achieve at high levels and it is the responsibility of educators to create environments for student learning to occur;
- Effective instruction makes the most difference in student achievement;
- All staff must be committed to children and to the pursuit of high student achievement;
- All schools must be safe, caring and orderly to enable teachers to teach and students to learn; and
- Only through collaboration with and engagement of community organizations, institutions, agencies, and families can the district realize its vision and mission.

District Priorities, Goals, and Strategies

Realization of our vision and mission requires nothing short of transforming the district.

1. **Effective Academic Programs:** All academic programs are research based and driven by student outcomes.
2. **Safe, Caring, and Orderly Schools:** All schools are safe to enable teachers to teach and students to learn.
3. **Family and Community Engagement:** District and school staff involve, engage, and collaborate with families and community institutions, organizations, and agencies to improve student outcomes.
4. **Efficient and Responsive Operations:** District office divisions and departments support the district and school's core business and is responsive to the needs of all staff, students, parents, and community.

Twenty-three measurable goals and numerous school improvement strategies are aligned with each priority (*see Illustration 2*). These priorities, goals, and strategies are intended to create an aligned instructional system, build capacity among teachers and principals, create a strong district-level support system, and involve parents and community partners.



Illustration 2: Bright Futures Priorities, Goals, & Strategies

Priority I: Effective Academic Programs

Goal 1: Increase Student Achievement

- Aligned instructional system
- Extended learning opportunities
- High quality teachers in each classroom
- Restructure schools
- Evaluation of academic programs

Goal 2: Create Healthy School Cultures

- Effective Schools Initiative
- Attendance and truancy initiative
- Student government associations

Goal 3: Improve Graduation Rate, Reduce Dropout Rate

- High school renewal initiative
- District-wide pre-K-12 progression plan

Goal 4: Improve Internal Communication

- Internal communication plan
- Teachers' Roundtable
- Principals' Roundtable
- Students' Roundtable
- Student forums

Goal 5: Progression Planning For School and Administrative Positions

- Principals' and Assistant Principals' preparation program

Goal 6: Increase Academic Rigor

- Gifted and talented program
- Honors and advanced placement
- International Baccalaureate program

Goal 7: Professional Development (teachers and administrators)

Priority II: Safe, Caring and Orderly Schools

Goal 1: Create Schools with Healthy School Cultures and Climates

Goal 2: Improve Student Discipline

- Review and revise student code of conduct
- Expand alternative schools
- In-school suspension programs
- Professional development (classroom management)

Goal 3: School Uniforms (elementary/middle)

Goal 4: Student Advisories

Goal 5: Character Education

Goal 6: Review and Revise Student Assignment/School Choice Plan

Goal 7: Facilities are clean and safe and meet 21st century learning standards

Priority III: Family and Community Engagement

Goal 1: Create Family and Community Engagement Plan

- Parent/teacher organizations in each school
- District-wide PTA/PTO council
- Ad hoc community-based committees and task forces
- Annual community forums

Goal 2: External Communications Plan

Goal 3: Customer Service Focus (Schools)

- Professional development for all staff
- Translation and interpretation services

Goal 4: Partnerships with Community Organizations, Agencies, and Institutions

- CEO roundtable
- Roundtable for institutions of higher education
- Faith-based initiatives

Goal 5: Full Service Schools (Community Schools)

Goal 6: Parent Education

Priority IV: Efficient and Responsive Operations

Goal 1: Increase Accountability for Performance

- Revise performance appraisal system
- Periodic assessment of services
- Team building at all levels
- Revamp operational procedures
- Automate administrative functions
- Whistle-blowers box

Goal 2: Customer Service Focus

- Improve internal communications
- Improve responsiveness to current and emergent needs district-wide
- Professional development in best practices for operational functions
- Suggestion box (online and at district office)

Goal 3: Increase Capacity

- Reorganize and restructure district administration
- Professional development
- Update technology and instructional applications

Accomplishments: 2009-2012 School Years

Since the development of Bright Futures, the district has aggressively implemented many of its strategies, such as:

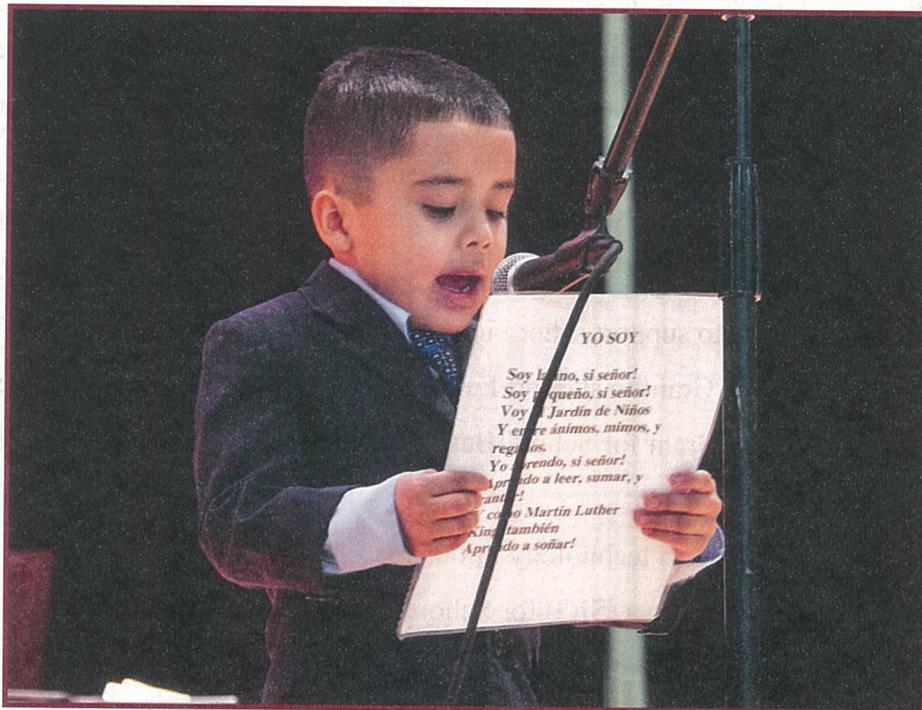
1. Transformed (reorganizing and re-staffing) its large comprehensive high schools into autonomous small schools (Eastside and John F. Kennedy High Schools).
2. Restructured and re-staffed its lowest performing elementary schools (Schools 4, 6, & 10).
3. Converted all high schools into “thematic schools of choice” (All incoming ninth graders and tenth graders choose the high school they attend).
4. Created three full service community schools (Schools 4, 5, & New Roberto Clemente).
5. Reorganized and re-staffed district operational divisions (finance, human resources, and facilities).
6. Established Parent/Teacher Organizations in each school.
7. Created the state’s first curriculum based student operated credit union.
8. Reduced audit exceptions and resulting recommendations resulting from external fiscal audits conducted annually for the past three years and brought stability to the district’s fiscal operation.
9. Scored 88 points on for the governance DPR on the two most recent QSAC reviews conducted by the Executive County Superintendent and his team.
10. Created a continuum of Alternative Education schools and services to meet the needs of students for whom traditional high schools were not meeting their unique and special needs.
11. Implemented the new Common Core Standards and Expectations to grades K-2.
12. Created and implemented a new Learning Walk protocol, including rubrics aligned to the new state Common Core.
13. Acquired grant funding to support school improvement initiatives:
 - a. Promise Community Grant to support Full Service Community Schools - \$2.3 million.
 - b. Affordable Care Act Grant for School-Based Health Centers in full service schools - \$500,000.
 - c. Talent 21 grant to support technology initiatives - \$2.2 million.
 - d. School Improvement Grants (SIG) for Schools 4 & 10 - \$12 million.

These and other changes have contributed to improvements in student academic outcomes.

1. The district has achieved its highest score ever for first-time takers of the High School

Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) with increases in proficiency for both language arts literacy (LAL) and mathematics.

2. HSPA LAL scores grew from 59.5% in 2011 to 66.4% in 2012 to 71.8% in 2013 with 88.6% of general education students at or above proficient.
3. HSPA mathematics scores have increased from 30.9% in 2011 to 46.6% in 2012 to 49.7% in 2013 with 60.7% of general education students at or above proficient.
4. The district's graduation rate using the cohort method for the 2013 graduating class grew to 72.1% as compared to 66.4% in 2012, 64.3% in 2011 and 50.4% in 2010.
5. Percentage of graduates who have been accepted to and plan to attend a 2 or 4 year college/university has grown to 70.8% in 2013 from 55.9% in 2011.
6. The percentage of students in Grades 3-8 performing at or above proficient in language arts increased from 35.5% in 2010-11 to 40.1% in 2012-13, from 49.1% to 52% in mathematics and from 58.7% to 61.2% in science.
7. Our preschool programmatic scores increased from 5.16 (2010-2011) to 5.66 (2012-2013) on the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R), a programmatic assessment instrument utilized by the NJDOE statewide evaluation designed to measure the overall quality of both the overall classroom environment and program quality.



District Transformation Initiatives: 2012-2013

For the 2012-2013 school year, the school instituted additional steps to accelerate improvements in academic and non-academic outcomes. In the spring of 2012, the district identified additional school and district improvement objectives and strategies to accelerate increases in student academic outcomes.

Aligned with *Bright Futures*' goals, the objectives were:

- Build healthy school cultures and climates
- Redesign critical processes and procedures
- Revise teacher and administrator evaluation systems
- Implement Common Core State Standards
- Implement high impact academic interventions for low performing students
- Strengthen the district's assessment system
- Build capacity among staff
 - o Teachers
 - o Principals and vice-principals
 - o District administrators and supervisors

School improvement strategies aligned with each objective are noted in Illustration 3.

Illustration 3: District Transformation Initiatives

Comprehensive Assessment System	Common Core	Healthy School Culture	Capacity Building	Teacher / Principal Evaluation	High Impact Interventions	Process Redesign
Star Math & ELA	Univ. of Pittsburgh IFL	Effective Schools	Univ. of Pittsburgh IFL	Focal Point	Innovation Zone	APQC
PARCC	Model Curriculum	Principal's Autonomy	K-3 Literacy Initiative		RAC	
			School/District Restructuring		End Social Promotion	
			Special Education Restructuring		Attendance Initiative	
			ELL Restructuring		Graduation Enhancement	
					NJPBSIS	

A Comprehensive and Robust Interim Assessment System

Consistent with state requirements, the district annually administers the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJASK) to all students in grades three through eight. Similarly, the High School Proficiency Assessment is administered to students in grade eleven. Fourth and eighth graders in the district participate in the state's science testing, and students enrolled in Algebra I participate in Algebra I testing.

Among the strategies for improving student achievement in the district is frequent and regular use of interim assessment. This is accomplished through formative assessments that are administered to monitor student academic growth and inform teaching. Classroom teachers use the results to determine if students have accomplished mastery of content to desired expectations and targets. Formative assessments used in the district include Star Math and Reading, the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT), and the Model Curriculum Unit Assessments.

Renaissance Learning Star Mathematics and English Language Arts Assessments

Renaissance Learning's assessment tools are short-cycle interim assessments that provide formative assessment and periodic progress-monitoring to enhance delivery of the core curriculum and support differentiated and personalized instruction in reading, writing and mathematics. All students take the fifteen minute tests using computers in their school once each nine-week grading period.

STAR assessments are aligned to the Common Core State Standards and state-specific standards so teachers can assess standards mastery. They are also linked and aligned to standards and tests for 50 states and the District of Columbia to help identify students at risk of not meeting adequate yearly progress and proficiency targets so teachers can intervene early.

Test results that are available to teachers immediately upon completion by students provide actionable information that helps drive curriculum and instruction decisions quickly and intuitively. Key features include:

- **Reports** that provide information on screening, progress-monitoring, instructional planning, state standards, CCSS standards, and state performance.
- **Skills-based testing** to assist teachers with instructional planning.
- **Benchmarks** for response to intervention state test performance, to show if a student is on track to reach proficiency or in need of intervention.

- **Tools** such as Core Progress learning progressions for math and reading and Student Growth Percentile measurements

In September 2011, The Paterson Public School District engaged Renaissance Learning to begin utilization of the Star Assessment System (Star Reading and Star Math) in grades K-12. The tests are administered to all students once in each nine-week grading period.

Critical-Thinking Aptitude Tests

At the high school level, the Paterson Public School District annually administers the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) to all students in grades 9, 10, and 11. The PSAT/NMSQT measures critical reading skills, math problem-solving skills, and writing skills

At the elementary level, Paterson's Gifted & Talented Academy utilizes The Test of Critical Thinking (TCT) to assess critical thinking in students in grades 4 through 8. The TCT is based theoretically on aspects of the Delphi Report (Facione, 1990a) and especially Paul's (1992) model of reasoning, specifically Paul's eight elements of thought. The TCT consists of ten short stories or text scenarios, each of which is followed by several multiple choice questions that require students to employ critical thinking, rather than reading comprehension skills, to select correct responses.

PARCC

In the spring 2015, New Jersey's NJASK and HSPA will be replaced by a standard set of K-12 assessments in English Language Arts and Mathematics developed by The **Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers** (PARCC). These new summative assessments will measure readiness and mark progress toward the goal of college and career readiness, beginning in 3rd grade through 11th grade. The content of these assessments is based on what it takes to be successful in college and careers in



the future. The assessments will enable teachers, schools, students, and their parents to gain important insights into how well critical knowledge, skills and abilities essential for students to thrive in college and careers are being mastered. The PARCC assessments will also coincide with the full range of the Common Core State Standards roll-out, to ensure that the standards are present in classrooms.

The PARCC assessment will contain two summative components – a performance-based assessment (PBA) and an End-of-Year Assessment (EOY). The PBA portion will be administered when approximately 75 percent of the school year is complete (February-March). ELA students will analyze and write about a text, whereas in the mathematics section, students will apply skills, concepts and understandings to solve problems. The EOY portion will be administered when approximately 90 percent of the school year is complete (April-May). The EOY will focus on reading comprehension for ELA and innovative problem solving for math. The assessments will provide teachers and schools with timely information to inform instruction and provide student support.

PARCC assessments will be fully administered in spring 2015, where schools will have a maximum of 20 school days to administer the PBA and a maximum of 20 school days to administer the EOY. Field testing for the PARCC assessments will begin in spring 2014. There are 26 schools in Paterson that will be field testing the PARCC assessments in spring 2014.

Paterson Public Schools- PARCC Field Testing	
Grades	Number of Classrooms for Each Grade
3	8
4	11
5	10
6	14
7	8
8	10
9	6
10	10
11	2
Algebra II	6
Geometry	4
Total Classrooms	89

Common Core State Standards

The Common Core State Standards initiative is a state-led effort coordinated by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). In June 2010, the New Jersey State Board of Education (NJBOE) and the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The standards were developed in collaboration with teachers, school administrators, and experts, to provide a clear and consistent framework to prepare our children for college and the workforce.

The standards are informed by the highest, most effective models from states across the country and countries around the world, and provide teachers and parents with a common understanding of what students are expected to learn. Consistent standards will provide appropriate benchmarks for all students, regardless of where they live.

These 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 aligned with college and work expectations;
- Are clear, understandable and consistent;
- Include rigorous content and application of knowledge through high-order skills;
- Build upon strengths and lessons of current state standards;
- Are informed by other top performing countries, so that all students are prepared to succeed in our global economy and society; and
- Are evidence-based.

Model Curriculum

To assist districts and schools with implementation of the Common Core State Standards and New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards, The New Jersey Department of Education provides a “model” that serves as an example from which to develop or align their curriculum and/or a product they can implement. Each unit contains targeted student learning objectives (SLOs) that explain what students need to know and be able to do within the unit. The six-week formative assessments included in the model curriculum help clarify the level of rigor expected from the standards and provide a great set of assessment tools that are often difficult for districts and schools to create on their own.

The Paterson Public School District initially used the model curriculum for English/language arts

and developed its own aligned curriculum for mathematics. More recently, the district has aligned its K-12 curriculum in English/language arts to the new Common Core State Standards.

The University of Pittsburgh/Institute for Learning

The University of Pittsburgh's Institute for Learning (IFL) is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the education and achievement of all students, especially those traditionally underserved. Their research-based curriculum materials, assessment instruments, and professional development build instructional and leadership capacity of teachers and administrators, and provide students with high quality instruction and learning opportunities that align with the Core Curriculum Content Standards (CCCS), Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and emerging assessments. Their work is rooted in the research on teaching and learning that confirms that virtually all students, if they work hard at the right kinds of learning tasks, in the right kinds of environments, are capable of high achievement.

The IFL base their work on nine *Principles of Learning*, which was introduced to Paterson Public Schools in the 2011-2012 school year. They are:

1. Organizing for Effort
2. Clear Expectations
3. Fair and Credible Evaluations
4. Recognition of Accomplishment
5. Academic Rigor in a Thinking Curriculum
6. Accountable Talk
7. Socializing Intelligence
8. Self-management of Learning
9. Learning as an Apprenticeship

The IFL is currently providing services and support to the Paterson Public Schools for accomplishing the following goals, which are critical to accomplishment of Priority 1, Effective Academic Programs, of *Bright Futures: the Strategic Plan for Paterson Public Schools, 2009-2014*:

1. Improve the quality of teaching and learning for all students in the PPS, starting in 2011-2013 with teachers, coaches, and school leaders of 25 schools in Unit 1, adding staff from 10 additional Unit 1 schools in 2012-2013, and expanding to all Unit 1 and selected Unit 2 teachers and coaches of specific subjects at specific grade levels in 2013-2014.

2. Ensure that high quality support for English Language Learners is embedded in the core instructional program.
3. Develop capacity district-wide for the development and effective use of high quality curriculum and formative assessments that are aligned to existing New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards, the new Common Core State Standards (CCSS), and the emerging work of the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC).

The strategy and implementation plan for accomplishing these objectives has evolved based on the district's system-wide capacity, PPS data related to student achievement, IFL's System-Wide Instructional Improvement Framework, and the availability of IFL resources. The intent is to collaboratively design and implement a powerful, system-wide strategy that engages district and school staff in the work of improving student learning, while at the same time developing the instructional program coherence, and the organizational, human, and social capacity required to take this work to scale in the 3-5 years to follow.

Healthy School Culture

Effective Schools Model

The Paterson Effective Schools model includes ten dimensions of school effectiveness which are grounded in *The Seven Correlates of Highly Effective Schools* (Larry Lezotte) as well as research and practice on professional development and school culture. Paterson's model is patterned after similar models successfully implemented in the Hillsborough County Schools in Tampa, Florida and The Providence Public Schools, in Providence, Rhode Island. Each of the model's dimensions includes indicators that define effective, specific observable practices which will:

1. Provide a blueprint or roadmap for creating and maintaining effective schools.
2. Serve as a curriculum for continuous professional development for school and district administrators and teachers.
3. Provide tools for gathering consistent information to determine a school's strengths and areas in need of improvement in the context of effective schools' research and practice.
4. Provide uniform expectations and practices for all schools.
5. Serve as the basis for assessing the effectiveness of individual schools.
6. Provide a common set of "Correlates" or "Dimensions" through which Comparability of Education Quality can be assessed and assured – a lens through which all schools can be viewed.

Research has clearly demonstrated that a school that rates high on the first nine effectiveness

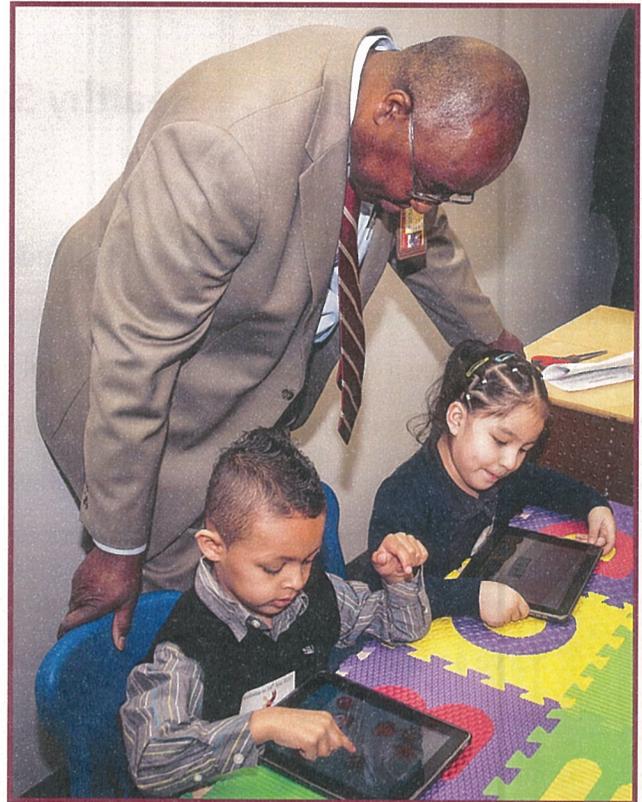
dimensions is highly effective in meeting the needs of all its students. To this end, each school will use a locally developed assessment instrument to internally assess its performance on all ten dimensions of the model. This instrument will assess the attitudes and impressions of school faculty (teaching and non-teaching staff), parents and students. The results of the assessments will be used in the development of individual school improvement plans and will inform performance appraisals of principals.

Several guiding assumptions provide the foundation for this model:

1. All students under the right conditions can achieve at high levels.
2. The unit of analysis for school effectiveness must be the school; the unit of analysis for effectiveness within each school must be the classroom.
3. The effectiveness of every school must be assessed; no school will be exempt from analysis.
4. Improving school effectiveness is non-negotiable; every school's effectiveness can and will be maximized.
5. When evaluation data suggest that a project or program no longer contributes to the effectiveness of the school or district, or to the realization of the district's vision or mission, it will be discontinued.
6. Pre-existing expectations and behavioral norms not aligned to the model will norms are no longer acceptable mentalities.

The Ten Dimensions of School Effectiveness Are:

1. Principal as Leader: The principal leads, manages and communicates the total instructional program to staff, students and parents.
2. Clearly Stated Vision and Mission: The school's vision/mission is clearly articulated and understood.
3. High Expectations: The staff believes, demonstrates and promotes the belief that all students can achieve at a high level.
4. Assessment and Monitoring: Student academic progress is monitored frequently with a variety of assessment instruments.
5. Instructional Delivery: Teachers consistently use effective teaching practices and allocate a



significant amount of time to instruction in essential content and skill areas.

6. **Safe, Caring and Orderly Environment:** The school's atmosphere is orderly, caring, purposeful and professional.
7. **Parent and Community Involvement:** Parents support the school's mission and play an active role in its achievement.
8. **Professional Development:** Professional development for all faculty and staff supports the instructional program.
9. **School Culture:** The school's culture, climate, or both are responsive to and support the needs of the students, parents and community.
10. **Ethics in Learning:** The school community is innovative in modeling and building a school culture that is characterized by integrity, fairness and ethical practices.

Successful implementation of this model requires that all dimensions are fully implemented. Successful implementation requires that all stakeholders, including unions, community partners, parents, and colleges and universities work collaboratively.

Principals' Autonomy

In the spring 2011, the district instituted steps to increase principal's autonomy by affording them more control in the hiring of their teachers and other instructional staff. Additionally, a principal's ability to remove ineffective teachers from schools is enabled by the use of an aggressive performance-based evaluation system that is linked to student achievement. The district has further enhanced a principal's autonomy by implementing a "no forced placement" policy.

Capacity Building

Pre-K Through Grade 3 Literacy Initiative

During the 2012-2013 school year, the Paterson Public School district continued to strengthen its early childhood programs to provide each child with high quality learning experiences in grades pre-K through 3. A plan was created to develop an early learning system in Paterson that provides every student with access to consistent quality standards and a solid foundation for academic success. The plan aims to offer children and families from pre-school through third grade a common road map and unified goals.

Thirty-six hundred three and four year old students are enrolled in provider settings and in-district pre-school programs. One strategy is to relocate students in private providers that are not meeting

district and staff standards and expectations to programs and schools that are meeting these expectations. To that end, in September 2012, ten classrooms opened at St. Mary's school providing 150 seats for three and four year olds and two classrooms opened at School 24 providing thirty additional seats. In 2013, an additional ten pre-school classrooms were added to three priority schools (schools 6, 10, and 28) and our collaboration with Head Start will be expanded.

Additional strategies implemented for students grades pre-k through grade 3 include:

- Providing skills aligned to the domains of children's development: cognitive, social/emotional, and physical.
- Using a curriculum which encompasses the New Jersey Department of Education's K-3 Teaching and Learning Expectations. These expectations, along with the Common Core State Standards are the foundation of curriculum development and implementation with the emphasis on the development of children's thinking, reasoning, decision making, and problem-solving abilities.
- Offering Literacy Instructional Blocks (120 minutes) to help ensure Language Arts experiences in early childhood concentrate on foundational skills including: print concepts, phonological awareness, phonics and word recognition, and fluency.
- Providing reading comprehension, writing, speaking and listening opportunities, and language goals integrated in content areas.
- Providing young children with extensive exposure to high quality text and opportunities to transfer and practice reading and decoding skills is a necessary for success in later grades.
- Ensuring that classrooms that have various reading materials on multiple levels to scaffold students reading.
- Integrating Social Studies experiences to assist the early learner to develop an understanding of people and how they relate to others and the world around them, themselves, their families, and their communities through interdisciplinary and thematic lessons.
- Integrating science curriculum that is interdisciplinary and thematic. Early learners are encouraged to wonder "what will happen if" and test possibilities demonstrating cause and effect. The integration of the arts, health and physical education in early learning.
- Integrating art and music with other academic subjects with the purpose of developing skills, exploring roles, assessing learning and understanding concepts.

As we continue to strengthen our early learning system our work with Paterson Reads, a community collaboration of the Paterson Alliance, the Paterson Education Fund and other community agencies will provide opportunities to enhance and improve Summer Learning, Reading on grade level by third grade

and attendance for our youngest students. Paterson Reads has expanded the Paterson Public library summer reading program offering students more books, reading circles and literacy activities during the summer, works with New Jersey Reach out and Read to identify Paterson pediatricians and funders to implement “Reach Out and Read”, which provides reading assistance books for each child at their well child visit and continues their efforts to implement Breakfast After the Bell to help increase on time attendance at designated elementary schools.

School/District Restructuring

During the four years since 2009, the district has restructured a number of elementary and high schools. Schools identified for restructuring typically were not meeting academic targets or had pervasive staff or discipline challenges that otherwise impeded progress. Specific changes that occurred included a combination of changes in:

- leadership and administrative structure;
- faculty and staff;
- students;
- grade configuration; and
- curriculum and instructional approaches, including the addition of thematic or special programs.

In most instances the schools were closed and reopened as a newly configured school with a new principal, new faculty, new students, and often new instructional programming. During the 2012-2013 school year, the district restructured schools 11, 15, 28, and New Roberto Clemente. New programs included an Academy for the Gifted & Talented at School 28, a Newcomers program at School 11 for non-English speakers new to the district, a middle school at New Roberto Clemente, and a newly configured K-5 elementary school at School 15.

Previous to last year, the district restructured and re-staffed its high schools into autonomous small thematic choice schools and reconfigured and re-staffed three of its elementary schools.

Special Education Restructuring

Although the district has experienced significant improvements in academic gains in recent years, significant achievement gaps remain among subgroups. This includes, but is not limited to special education. For this and other reasons, the district engaged *The Center for Research and Evaluation on Education and Human Services* (CREEHS) at Montclair State University to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of its special education programs and services which began September 2011.

As requested, the resulting evaluation report identified several significant findings and areas in need

of improvement. Chief among the findings was that proficiency rates on state achievement tests are particularly low for students with disabilities and that students receiving special education services are also less likely to graduate high school in four years, more likely to drop out of school, and more likely to be suspended than are those who do not receive special education services.

Numerous recommendations for improvements were forwarded including (but not limited to):

- An integrated “one-world” district-wide plan, philosophy, and vision should be developed to address the current separation between general and special education and allow for the provision of consistent and effective services across schools;
- A coordinated organizational and supervisory structure, including clear roles and responsibilities for each position, should be developed and disseminated to clarify staff expectations, improve communication, and streamline processes;
- Effective transitional counseling should be provided for students moving from school to school and from high school to post-secondary life;
- Ongoing, coherent professional development should be provided to all teachers regarding best practices for teaching students with diverse needs, including those with and without disabilities;
- Comprehensive and ongoing training and support should be provided to building administrators regarding best practices for teaching students with diverse needs and for administering special education services, including compliance to state and federal regulations; and
- An integrated and cohesive data system is needed to coordinate and share data across departments and schools and to allow for ongoing monitoring of program success.

An implementation plan for the recommendations was developed during the 2012-2013 school year and is currently being implemented.

Restructuring Programs for English Language Learners (Bilingual)

Among the student subgroups for whom significant achievement gaps exist are English Language Learners or students with Limited English Proficiency. To better align bilingual instruction with state and local initiatives and bring about needed academic and programmatic improvements, the district engaged the University of Pittsburgh Institute for Learning (IFL) to conduct a review of the education program for the district’s English Language Learners (ELLs). Of particular interest was making improvements to its instructional core – how students learn and teachers teach, and how the teacher’s work affects student learning.

To this end, this report: (1) describes the service delivery educational system for ELLs in Paterson;

(2) delineates the management of programs for ELLs, its central functions as well as the school-based responsibilities and authority; (3) lists Paterson's observed assets and the challenges facing Paterson administrators and teachers in improving educational outcomes for ELLs; (4) describes the district's readiness to provide ELLs access to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS); and (5) provides a list of recommendations intended to improve the education of English Learners.

As noted in the evaluation report, to bring coherence and a robust program design for Paterson ELLs, the following recommendations are offered:

- Develop a clear vision and set of beliefs, accompanied by a theory of action that is grounded in research-based practices for the education of ELLs so that they can be college-ready;
- Develop an organizational structure to support the vision and program. Coherence is at the center of this request;
- Appoint a permanent leader to the Bilingual/ESL Department as part of this organizational structure;
- Design a research-based program of instruction for ELLs that will provide continuity of service to ELLs and can be resourced by the district;
- Ensure that teachers are knowledgeable about pedagogy, supports, rituals, and routines for supporting ELLs. Teachers and principals need intensive professional development on how to help ELLs access the CCSS through best practices for English Learners;
- Provide EL students with resources that will give them access to the CCSS. The materials and texts provided to them must meet the CCSS requisites regarding grade level and complexity;
- Set up a communication mechanism for stakeholder input with central leaders; and
- Recognize that parents of ELLs have a voice in their children's education and some have much to say regarding the quality of education they think students are currently receiving.

The University of Pittsburgh/Institute of Learning

(Please see Common Core Standards section on page 18)

Teacher And Principal Evaluation Systems

Focal Point

Since 2010, the New Jersey Department of Education has been working to improve educator evaluation and supports. These efforts included a two-year pilot that involved more than 15,000 teachers and

principals. Building on this work, New Jersey's 2012 TEACHNJ Act now mandates many requirements for the new statewide educator evaluation system and links tenure decisions to evaluation ratings. On September 11, 2013, the State Board approved regulations outlining specific evaluation policies for 2013–14 which is the first year of full statewide implementation of this new system, AchieveNJ.

As a result, all school districts in New Jersey are required to adopt and implement evaluations systems for principals and teachers that are approved by the Department of Education. Paterson has selected Focal Point's teacher and principal evaluation instruments. These instruments help guide observers as they identify key components of effective teaching, ensure that a teacher's practice is evaluated consistently, and that teachers are receiving meaningful feedback.



All administrators and teachers have been trained on the new systems. Teacher training has also focused on curriculum alignment/instructional strategies and the teacher evaluation performance rubric. In addition, in September 2012, a crosswalk tool and process was introduced district-wide to help prepare staff for full implementation in September 2013.

Attributes or components of the new administrator and teacher evaluation systems include:

- New instruments and processes;
- Consideration of student academic performance;
- Aligned instructional system (standards, curriculum, assessment, & professional development);
- Performance criteria for teachers
 - o Preparation for instruction
 - o Use of data to inform instruction
 - o Delivery of instruction
 - o Interventions to meet diverse needs
 - o Classroom environment
 - o Leadership
 - o Professionalism

- Performance criteria for administrators
 - o Leadership
 - o Instructional Program
 - o Staff Development
 - o Effective Management
 - o Professional Responsibilities

High Impact Interventions

Initiatives being implemented in the district to improve student achievement and other outcomes include research-based strategies and programs that have proven highly effective in producing and sustaining desired outcomes from students and staff over time as well as “high impact strategies” or programs designed to accelerate increased achievement among the lowest performing students on a much shorter timeline. Implementing the IFL’s Principles of Learning represents a highly effective and research-based long term strategy. Technology driven reading or math programs such as Read 180 represent a highly effective short-term strategy.

This section is intended to describe high impact strategies implemented in the district. Initiatives that provide structures through which these strategies were chosen or designed are also included or referenced. They are the Paterson Innovation Zone, Regional Achievement Centers (RAC), New Jersey Positive Behavior Supports in Schools (NJPBSIS), and High School Renewal.

Paterson Innovation Zone

In 2010-2011, the district took a major step toward accelerating improvement in academic and non-academic outcomes with the creation of The Paterson Innovation Zone. The aim of the initiative is to accelerate achievement by creating an aligned instructional system, building capacity among teachers and principals, creating a strong district-level support system, and involving parents and community partners. Schools involved in this endeavor the first year included twelve of the district’s lowest performing elementary schools, one of its highest performing elementary schools, three of its lowest performing high schools, two of its highest performing high schools, and one local charter school. All of the schools together comprised one administrative unit under the supervision of an Assistant Superintendent for Administration.

All Zone schools are held accountable for operating consistent with district policies, procedures, and academic and non-academic expectations. In addition, Zone schools:

1. Employ the “managed instruction” theory of action.
2. Benchmark and set academic targets: analyze test scores and establish academic and non-academic performance targets for district identified indicators of success.
3. Implement with fidelity the University of Pittsburgh’s *Principles of Learning* instructional model to build capacity among teachers and administrators.
4. Participate in targeted and focused professional development by the Institute for Learning for teachers and administrators.
5. Implement with fidelity the Paterson Effective Schools’ Model.
6. Pilot implementation of the national Common Core Standards.
7. Pilot the district’s performance-based assessment and pay systems.

The primary approach used in these schools was and continues to be:

1. Establishing strategic direction and academic targets for the school and classes.
2. Using assessment data to identify students’ academic strengths and weaknesses.
3. Developing lesson plans and provide professional development to teachers and principals on effective instructional practices.
4. Delivering rigorous instruction to all students.
5. Re-assessing students (interim assessments) to measure progress.

For the 2012-2013 school year, the Innovation Zone was re-conceptualized and re-organized to include the district’s six elementary priority schools, fourteen focus elementary schools, and four focus high schools, each of which implements the Regional Achievement Center Approach.

Regional Achievement Centers

Through New Jersey’s waiver from provisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the New Jersey Department of Education developed a new school accountability system to replace certain provisions of No Child Left Behind. One outcome of the waiver is the identification of priority, focus, and reward schools in the state. A Priority School is one “that has been identified as among the lowest-performing five percent of Title I schools in the state over the past three years, or any non-Title I school that would otherwise have met the same criteria. A Focus School is a school that has room for improvement in areas that are specific to the school such as low graduation rates or within-school achievement gaps. Reward Schools are those with outstanding student achievement or growth over the past three years. As previously mentioned, Paterson includes six priority schools and 18 focus

schools.

A second outcome of the waiver is the creation of Regional Achievement Centers (RAC). RACs represent a new system of seven field-based centers that are charged with working with school districts on making improvements in New Jersey's Priority and Focus Schools. RAC staff partner with Priority and Focus Schools to execute comprehensive School Improvement Plans aligned to the eight turnaround principles that are:

- **School Leadership:** The principal has the ability to lead the turnaround effort
- **School Climate and Culture:** A climate conducive to learning and a culture of high expectations
- **Effective Instruction:** Teachers utilize research-based effective instruction to meet the needs of all students
- **Curriculum, Assessment, and Intervention System:** Teachers have the foundational documents and instructional materials needed to teach to the rigorous college and career ready standards that have been adopted
- **Effective Staffing Practices:** The skills to better recruit, retain and develop effective teachers and school leaders
- **Enabling the Effective Use of Data:** School-wide use of data focused on improving teaching and learning, as well as climate and culture
- **Effective Use of Time:** Time is designed to better meet student needs and increase teacher collaboration focused on improving teaching and learning
- **Effective Family and Community Engagement:** Increased academically focused family and community engagement

In addition to school improvement initiatives and strategies created and implemented by the district during the 2012-2013 school year, the following RAC financed interventions were instituted in priority and focus schools.

- Onsite school-based supervisors in priority and focus schools.
- Teacher mentor leaders in priority schools (language arts, mathematics, data, climate and culture).
- Teacher mentor of professional development and data analysis in focus schools.

In addition to mentor teachers, school-based supervisors will be assigned to focus and priority elementary schools. The role of a school-based supervisor is two-fold: 1) to bring a higher level of support to principals and teachers, and 2) to bring a stronger and deeper level of pedagogy and increase

content knowledge of priority and focus schools' staff.

End Social Promotion

Prior to the 2011-2012 school year, district policies, procedures and expectations for promotion or retention from one grade to the next, were not executed with fidelity. The result was “social promotion” district-wide. This problem was especially problematic for students in grades Kindergarten through eight.

During the 2011-12, the Superintendent declared an end to social promotion by:

- Enforcing the district’s policies and procedures on promotion and retention;
- Requiring a summer academic program to students who failed to meet performance targets during the school year; and
- Requiring that if academic targets are not met by the end of the summer program, students would be retained in the same grade.

The summer program includes intensive instruction in math and/or language arts. During the summer of 2012, more than 2000 students in grades Kindergarten through eight participated in the program and more than 95% met their targets and were promoted to the next grade.

Attendance Initiative

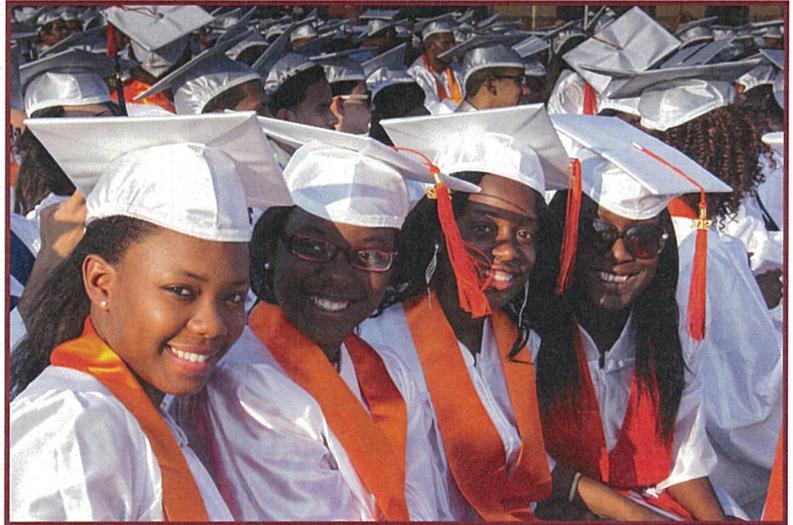
Research has shown that a student’s attendance is directly correlated to his or her student achievement. Although our district’s attendance rates have been maintained at a 91-93% average over the past few years, attendance in high school is below 90% and there are too many chronically absent children throughout all grade levels. Recognizing that future funding will depend partly on the district’s average daily attendance, the district has embarked on an attendance initiative which began with the establishment of a committee charged with the review of the district’s practices and procedures, as well as past attendance history and trends. The committee’s work has led to the collaboration with outside organizations on a district-wide attendance campaign. Additionally, the district’s internal attendance staffing model is being reviewed and revised in order to more efficiently monitor and address daily student attendance – particularly for those students who are chronically absent.

Graduation Enhancements

Among the high impact interventions implemented across the district to accelerate the achievement of academic and non-academic outcomes for all students, many focused specially on high schools and high school students. The aim was not only to improve performance on the High School Proficiency

Assessment (HSPA), but to improve the graduation rate, Implementation, drop-out rate, college acceptance and admissions rates, and parent engagement. Among the strategies are:

- District driven intensive mathematics intervention for teachers and students;
- Focus on students on the cusp;
- Transcript Reviews for all seniors and their parents (all central office administrators team with high school counselors including all supervisors, directors, assistant superintendents and the Superintendent)
- HSPA Prep classes
 - o Saturday, afterschool, boot camp, marathons, etc.
 - o Plato Learning
 - o Ipad tool intervention
 - o Heightened awareness and focus (students, staff, & parents)
- SAT Prep classes
- Focused learning walks
 - o Focal Point
 - o IFL
- Special Education Inclusive Programming
- Graduation enhancement strategies
 - o Credit recovery program
 - o Twilight program (night school)



NJPBSIS (Positive Behavior Support in Schools (PBSIS))

The purpose of the PBSIS initiative is to build capacity to support the social-behavioral needs of all students, including students with disabilities. NJPBSIS provides school staff with training and technical assistance to create environments that encourage and support pro-social student behavior at the school-wide, classroom, and individual student levels using current, research validated practices in positive behavior support. In doing this, school staff are better prepared to positively and proactively address the individualized behavior support needs of all students, including students with disabilities, engaging in repeated behavior issues.

Four focus and priority schools in the Innovation Zone (Schools 5, 6, 13 and NRC) received initial

PBSIS training in 2012-2013, and will begin Level 2 training in 2013. These schools will have a school-wide instructional event that teaches/reinforces the school-wide expectations, introduces the recognition system and celebrates students and staff. The Universal Team, which consists of 6-10 designated people, including a parent, was established and developed an Office Conduct Referral Process, which will be implemented in the 2013-2014 school year. The I&RS team will implement a function-based problem-solving process to develop interventions for students who engage in repeated unacceptable behaviors. The child study teams will use the function based problem solving process to develop behavior intervention plans for students with disabilities. Data will be collected to support on-going interventions.

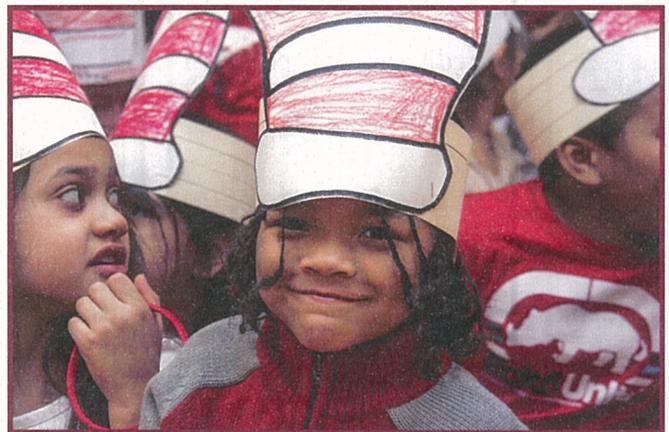
Moving forward to the 2013-14 school year, an additional 20 focus and priority schools including the alternative high schools will begin training in the PBSIS model.

Process Redesign

American Productivity and Quality Center (APQC)

“Productivity and quality improvement is a race without a finish line.” Effective school systems have well defined, well executed processes and procedures associated with critical operational functions. APQC, one of the world’s leading proponents of best practices and knowledge management research, has been working with the district over the past two years in redesigning, implementing, and sustaining processes that will provide a transformational support system for all schools and academic programs.

Previous to the 2012-2013 school year, APQC guided the district in redesigning processes and procedures in finance, curriculum, human resources, assessment, and school choice. This year, APQC worked with the district on refining processes and procedures in key administrative areas: Central Registration, Management Information Systems, Human Resources, Facilities and Transportation. Some of the outcomes of this work included:



- Savings of over \$2 million in one school year;
- Shortened administrative processing timelines by days, even weeks; and
- Improved customer satisfaction.

Accomplishments: 2012-2013 School Year

Process & Fiscal Outcomes

Since the development of Bright Futures, the district has aggressively implemented many of its strategies, such as:

1. Revised teacher & administrator evaluation systems;
2. Conducted professional development to build capacity among principals and staff;
3. Re-assigned principals to accomplish a more effective “goodness of fit” to improve student achievement;
4. Trained and continued to implement the new Common Core State Standards;
5. Implemented academic interventions for students performing below proficient in mathematics and/or language arts literacy on NJASK and HSPA;
6. Restructured elementary schools:
 - a. Opened Gifted & Talented Academy (at School 28);
 - b. Opened Newcomers School (at School 11);
 - c. Opened new middle school – grades 6-8 (New Roberto Clemente);
 - d. Restructured School 15 from grades K-8 to a pre-K-grade 5 elementary school; and
 - e. Added in-district pre-K classes (Madison Avenue, School 24, St. Mary’s Early Learning Center);
7. Created pre-kindergarten through grade 3 literacy initiative;
8. Ended social promotion; implemented mandatory summer school to advance to next grade;
9. Revised district’s Safety & Security Plan;
10. Developed and began implementing Internal & External Communications Plan.



11. Auditor's Management Report (AMR) of the 2012/2013 school year resulted in no significant findings or material weaknesses to report. Auditors commended district's Business Office.
12. Acquired grant funding to support district initiatives:
 - a. 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program (2012-2017) - \$2,647,900;
 - b. The Race-to-the-Top Phase 3 (RTTT3) to support the implementation of the revised Principal and Teacher Evaluation System - \$1,271,064;
 - c. HRSA: School Based Health Center Capital Program for School 6 & School 15 (2012-2014) - \$500,000;
 - d. Lowe's Community Improvement Grant for School 4 - \$100,000;
 - e. Excellent Educators for New Jersey (EE4NJ) Pilot Program Principal Effectiveness Evaluation System - \$50,000; and
 - f. Optimum Lightpath Grant for PANTHER academy to purchase equipment for a digital astronomy laboratory- \$10,000.



Academic Results

NJASK

The district has implemented a number of strategies – from administration of Renaissance Star Benchmark Assessments for students to professional development for teachers and principals – in order to further accelerate student achievement across all elementary schools.

The district has witnessed growth in every demographic group over the last year. In particular language arts and mathematics scores for our general education students Grades 3-8, are the highest they have been in the last 3 years. Additionally, Special Education and Limited English Proficient students have made notable improvement in every area especially in Science.

Other results include:

- The percentage of students in Grades 3-8 performing at or above proficient in language arts increased from 35.5% in 2010-11 to 40.1% in 2012-13, from 49.1% to 52% in mathematics and from 58.7% to 61.2% in science.



Percentage of Students in Grades 3-8 Proficient and Advanced Proficient in Language Arts, and Mathematics And Science			
	2012	2013	
	Language Arts		
Demographic Group	% Proficient & above	% Proficient & above	2012/2013 +/-
Total Students	38.1%	40.1%	+2.0%
General Education	47.1%	50.0%	+2.9%
Special Education	10.8%	11.9%	+1.1%
Limited English Proficient	23.1%	21.8%	-1.3%
	Mathematics		
Demographic Group	% Proficient & above	% Proficient & above	2012/2013 +/-
Total Students	51.0%	52.0%	+1.0%
General Education	60.2%	62.4%	+2.2%
Special Education	21.5%	21.3%	-0.2%
Limited English Proficient	40.1%	38.3%	-1.8%
	Science		
Demographic Group	% Proficient & above	% Proficient & above	2012/2013 +/-
Total Students	63.9%	61.2%	-2.7%
General Education	74.5%	72.6%	-1.9%
Special Education	34.8%	33.3%	-1.5%
Limited English Proficient	47.2%	43.2%	-4.0%

NJASK	2012	2013	
	Language Arts		2012/2013 +/-
Grade	% Proficient & above	% Proficient & above	+/-
3-8	38.1	40.1	+2.0
3-5	35.1	34.6	-0.5
6-8	41.1	45.4	+4.3
	Mathematics		
Grade	% Proficient & above	% Proficient & above	+/-
3-8	51.0	52.0	+1.0
3-5	57.9	57.7	-0.2
6-8	43.9	46.4	+2.5

HSPA

There has been an increased focus on HSPA preparation in all district high schools. The Paterson Public School District is realizing significant gains in HSPA results for first-time test takers. These results include:

- The percentage of first-time takers of HSPA performing at or above proficient in language arts literacy increased from 59.5% in 2011 to 71.8% in 2013 – a 12.3% increase in 2 years.
- The percentage of first-time takers of HSPA performing at or above proficient in mathematics increased from 30.9% in 2011 to 49.7% in 2013 – an 18.8% increase in 2 years.

Percentage of Students in Grade 11 Proficient and Above in HSPA Language Arts and Mathematics					
Language Arts Literacy	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Total	49.7%	51.7%	59.5%	66.4%	71.8%
General Ed.	72.3%	69.9%	76.0%	80.0%	88.6%
Special Ed.	9.7%	15.6%	23.8%	37.0%	32.6%
Limited Eng. Prof.	13.2%	22.1%	22.7%	30.0%	23.9%
TOTAL ENROLLED	783	921	982	920	975
VALID SCORES	775	897	942	889	957
Mathematics					
Total	31.9%	33.0%	30.9%	46.6%	49.7%
General Ed.	47.3%	45.1%	41.2%	58.1%	60.7%
Special Ed.	2.9%	7.3%	4.7%	13.9%	12.1%
Limited Eng. Prof.	8.2%	15.1%	8.6%	27.4%	30.4%
TOTAL ENROLLED	783	921	982	920	975
VALID SCORES	765	906	936	897	950
GRADUATION RATE		49.4%	64.0%	66.4%	NA
ATTENDANCE RATE	87.6%	87.0%	86.1%	85.2%	*89.2%

* Data reflects attendance up to May 29, 2013

HSPA Grade 11 2003-2013 Language Arts and Mathematics Proficient and Above											
Language Arts Literacy	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013 *
Total	56.9%	54.7%	53.8%	52.6%	56.3%	49.3%	49.7%	51.7%	59.5%	66.4%	71.8%
General Ed.	73.3%	70.6%	70.4%	69.3%	74.0%	65.7%	72.3%	69.9%	76.0%	80.0%	88.6%
Special Ed.	13.6%	6.1%	9.1%	7.3%	9.3%	8.3%	9.7%	15.6%	23.8%	37.0%	32.6%
Lmtd. Eng. Prof..	10.0%	11.0%	8.1%	11.0%	11.6%	9.0%	13.2%	22.1%	22.7%	30.0%	23.9%
Total Enrolled	809	968	1020	1091	1065	841	783	921	982	920	975
Valid Scores	791	958	984	1066	1039	814	775	897	942	889	957
Mathematics											
Total	39.9%	40.4%	47.2%	45.5%	39.7%	34.2%	31.9%	33.0%	30.9%	46.6%	49.7%
General Ed.	48.5%	50.0%	58.7%	57.6%	52.4%	46.0%	47.3%	45.1%	41.2%	58.1%	60.7%
Special Ed.	4.8%	9.1%	6.8%	4.5%	1.5%	1.9%	2.9%	7.3%	4.7%	13.9%	12.1%
Lmtd. Eng. Prof.	30.7%	20.3%	26.7%	25.4%	16.1%	13.9%	8.2%	15.1%	8.6%	27.4%	30.4%
Total Enrolled	809	968	1020	1091	1065	841	783	921	982	920	975
Valid Scores	791	951	964	1064	1033	811	783	906	936	897	950

* Preliminary: 2013 Data is based on the schools "Cycle I Report"

SAT Results

The SAT assesses students in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics. The district focused more aggressively on SAT preparation in the 2012 school year and as a result the mean scores for critical reading and writing have increased.

SAT Mean Scores					
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2011/2012 +/-
SAT Mathematics	387	387	388	389	+1
SAT Critical Reading	367	360	362	365	+3
SAT Writing	362	360	358	365	+7

PSAT Results

The district replaced the Standard Proficiency Assessment (SPA) with PSAT in the 2011-2012 school year for all ninth and tenth grade students. The College and Career Readiness Benchmarks are included in PSAT reporting to help educators better understand how many and also which students are on track to have the skills necessary for success in college.

PSAT October 2012			
Grade	Critical Reading (CR) Score	Mathematics (M) Score	Writing Skills (W) Score
	% Acceptable & Above	% Acceptable & Above	% Acceptable & Above
9	76.3%	59.0%	50.3%
10	77.8%	61.1%	53.3%

Graduation/Drop-Out Rate

Improving the graduation rate is a critical goal for the district. A number of initiatives were put into place including credit recovery programs and comprehensive transcript reviews for all high school seniors. Over the last several years the district has seen steady increases in both graduation rates and the number of students enrolling in college.

Paterson Public Schools Graduation/Dropout Rate*									
Graduation Year	Total Students**	Graduated		Dropouts		Transfers		Other	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
2009	2112	964	45.60	435	20.60	470	22.25	243	11.50
2010	1960	987	50.36	350	17.86	400	20.41	223	11.38
2011	1444	881	64.0%	85	5.9%	124	8.6%	354	24.5%
2012	1467	974	66.4%	141	9.6%	95	6.5%	257	17.5%
2013	1538	1109	72.1%	166	10.8%	98	6.4%	165	10.7%

*The "Four-Year Cohort Method" was used to calculate the Graduation/Drop-out rates

**Total students entering 9th grade as a "cohort"

Additionally, in our continued efforts to reduce the drop-out rate we have introduced the following:

- Twilight School, for our students who due to job or other obligations, need to attend school for a limited time; and
- Truancy bus was reinstated in February 2012. For the 2012-13 school year, 682 students were returned to school.

Paterson Public Schools Post-Graduation Plans				
Category	2012		2013	
	Numbers	Percentage	Numbers	Percentage
Total Students Enrolled	1226	N/A	1290	N/A
Total Received Diploma	1060	86.46%	1145	88.76%
Four-Year College	287	23.41%	318	24.65%
Two-Year College	598	48.78%	595	46.12%
Trade/Technical/Certificated Program	96	7.83%	125	9.69%
Undecided	25	2.03%	75	5.81%
Military	25	2.03%	32	2.48%
Employment	29	2.36%	84	6.51%

Comprehensive State Review

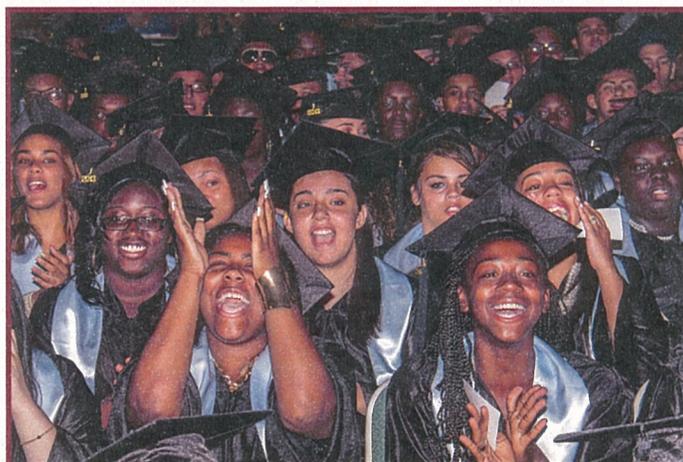
Quality Single Accountability Continuum (QSAC)

In accordance with statutory and code requirements, the Office of the County Superintendent of Schools conducted a full QSAC evaluation of the Paterson School District in the 2010 school year and released the district's Cycle II results in September 2011.

The district maintained a score above 80% (88%) in the area of Governance for the third consecutive time. After completing and submitting a District Improvement Plan (DIP), the county office conducted an Interim Review of the district's progress in all five district performance review (DPR) areas. Listed below are the scores for the district in each of the DPR areas since its first monitoring in 2007. The most recent placement scores show that the district has achieved the state benchmark score of 80% or above in four of the five District Performance Review (DPR) areas.

DPR Areas	Cycle I Placement Full Review 7/2007	Interim Review Placement 1/2010	Interim Review Placement 12/2010	Cycle II Placement Full Review 9/2011	Interim Review Placement 2/2013
Instruction & Program	22%	28%	31%	33%	39%
Fiscal Management	41%	45%	60%	51%	80%
Operations	73%	67%	85%	70%	95%
Personnel	60%	69%	90%	53%	80%
Governance	11%	44%	88%	88%	86%

These latest QSAC scores reflect the commitment made by the district and the Board of Education to improve student achievement. The scores in Fiscal Management, Operations, Personnel, and Governance signify that the district has made systemic changes that are improving the quality of education that is being provided to our students.



Staff Attendance

In the 2012-13 school year, Paterson Public School's staff attendance rate has increased to 92.5% exceeding last year's rate by 2.5%.

Student Attendance

It is the district's goal to have a daily student attendance rate of 96% in every school. Currently, Paterson Public Schools has a three year average daily attendance rate of 92%. The district has developed a comprehensive action plan to increase student attendance. An Attendance Taskforce was convened in the fall of 2012, and subcommittee chairpersons were selected to review and make recommendations in the areas of: accountability measures, legal interventions, incentives, policy revisions, communications, and a citywide campaign.

Paterson Public Schools' Average Daily Attendance		
Year	Elementary	High School
2009-2010	93.4%	88%
2010-2011	93.3%	85.1%
2011-2012	93.6%	85.2%
2012-2013	94.4%	89.0%



HSPA Results by High School

Academies at Eastside: Information & Technology			
	2012	2013	
	Language Arts Literacy	Language Arts Literacy	2012/ 2013 +/-
Demographic Group	% Proficient and Above	% Proficient and Above	
Total Students	47.2%	53.5%	+6.3%
General Education	68.1%	87.5%	+19.4%
Special Education	35.3%	11.1%	-24.2%
Limited English Proficient	23.5%	10.3%	-13.2%
	Mathematics	Mathematics	2011/ 2012 +/-
Demographic Group	% Proficient and Above	% Proficient and Above	
Total Students	36.4%	37.7%	+1.3%
General Education	59.6%	60.4%	+0.8%
Special Education	11.8%	12.5%	+0.7%
Limited English Proficient	21.2%	6.9%	-14.3%

Academies at Eastside: Government & Public Administration			
	2012	2013	
	Language Arts Literacy	Language Arts Literacy	2012/ 2013 +/-
Demographic Group	% Proficient and Above	% Proficient and Above	
Total Students	66.7%	96.0%	+29.3%
General Education	83.3%	95.1%	+11.8%
Special Education	83.3%	100.0%	+16.7%
Limited English Proficient	27.3%	100.0%	+72.7%
	Mathematics	Mathematics	2011/ 2012 +/-
Demographic Group	% Proficient and Above	% Proficient and Above	
Total Students	41.7%	71.0%	+29.3%
General Education	61.1%	69.4%	+8.3%
Special Education	0.0%	25.0%	+25.0%
Limited English Proficient	22.7%	100.0%	+77.3%

Academies at Eastside: Culinary Arts, Hospitality & Tourism			
	2012	2013	
	Language Arts Literacy	Language Arts Literacy	2012/ 2013 +/-
Demographic Group	% Proficient and Above	% Proficient and Above	
Total Students	59.7%	54.1%	-5.6%
General Education	74.4%	76.1%	+1.7%
Special Education	46.7%	33.3%	-13.4%
Limited English Proficient	25.0%	13.8%	-11.2%
	Mathematics	Mathematics	2012/ 2013 +/-
Demographic Group	% Proficient and Above	% Proficient and Above	
Total Students	38.2%	33.3%	-4.9%
General Education	47.7%	33.3%	-14.4%
Special Education	6.3%	6.7%	+0.4%
Limited English Proficient	46.7%	48.2%	+1.5%

HARP Academy			
	2012	2013	
	Language Arts Literacy	Language Arts Literacy	2012/ 2013 +/-
Demographic Group	% Proficient and Above	% Proficient and Above	
Total Students	93.8%	95.2%	+1.4%
General Education	95.1%	95.2%	+0.1%
Special Education	50.0%	100.0%	+50.0%
Limited English Proficient	100.0%	NA	NA
	Mathematics	Mathematics	2012/ 2013 +/-
Demographic Group	% Proficient and Above	% Proficient and Above	
Total Students	78.1%	82.5%	+4.4%
General Education	80.7%	83.9%	+3.2%
Special Education	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Limited English Proficient	0.0%	NA	NA

PANTHER Academy			
	2012	2013	
	Language Arts Literacy	Language Arts Literacy	2012/ 2013 +/-
Demographic Group	% Proficient and Above	% Proficient and Above	
Total Students	88.1%	85.7%	-2.4%
General Education	94.0%	88.7%	-5.3%
Special Education	55.6%	33.3%	-22.3%
Limited English Proficient	100.0%	NA	NA
	Mathematics	Mathematics	2012/ 2013 +/-
Demographic Group	% Proficient and Above	% Proficient and Above	
Total Students	53.4%	64.3%	+10.9%
General Education	58.8%	68.0%	+9.2%
Special Education	16.7%	0.0%	-16.7%
Limited English Proficient	20.0%	NA	NA

International High School and Garrett Morgan Academy			
	2012	2013	
	Language Arts Literacy	Language Arts Literacy	2012/ 2013 +/-
Demographic Group	% Proficient and Above	% Proficient and Above	
Total Students	92.2%	93.4%	+1.2%
General Education	95.4%	94.9%	-0.5%
Special Education	60.0%	87.5%	+27.5%
Limited English Proficient	80.0%	0.0%	-80.0%
	Mathematics	Mathematics	2011/ 2012 +/-
Demographic Group	% Proficient and Above	% Proficient and Above	
Total Students	76.9%	79.5%	+2.6%
General Education	79.8%	82.7%	+2.9%
Special Education	60.0%	50.0%	-10.0%
Limited English Proficient	70.0%	0.0%	-70.0%

Academies at John F. Kennedy: Architecture & Construction

	2012	2013	
	Language Arts Literacy	Language Arts Literacy	2012/ 2013 +/-
Demographic Group	% Proficient and Above	% Proficient and Above	
Total Students	41.7%	52.0%	+10.3%
General Education	61.8%	83.4%	+21.6%
Special Education	21.1%	27.8%	+6.7%
Limited English Proficient	21.4%	12.5%	-8.9%
	Mathematics	Mathematics	2012/ 2013 +/-
Demographic Group	% Proficient and Above	% Proficient and Above	
Total Students	30.0%	42.0%	+12.0%
General Education	39.4%	62.5%	+23.1%
Special Education	20.0%	22.2%	+2.2%
Limited English Proficient	14.3%	25.0%	+10.7%

Academies at John F. Kennedy: Business, Technology & Marketing

	2012	2013	
	Language Arts Literacy	Language Arts Literacy	2012/ 2013 +/-
Demographic Group	% Proficient and Above	% Proficient and Above	
Total Students	54.3%	46.2%	-8.1%
General Education	69.6%	80.0%	+10.4%
Special Education	29.4%	11.8%	-17.6%
Limited English Proficient	35.7%	0.0%	-35.7%
	Mathematics	Mathematics	2012/ 2013 +/-
Demographic Group	% Proficient and Above	% Proficient and Above	
Total Students	21.1%	20.6%	-0.5%
General Education	28.3%	32.4%	+4.1%
Special Education	5.6%	6.3%	+0.7%
Limited English Proficient	7.1%	7.7%	+0.6%

Academies at John F. Kennedy: Science, Technology, Engineering & Math

	2012	2013	
	Language Arts Literacy	Language Arts Literacy	2012/ 2013 +/-
Demographic Group	% Proficient and Above	% Proficient and Above	
Total Students	66.6%	73.9%	+7.3%
General Education	81.2%	89.5%	+8.3%
Special Education	22.2%	45.5%	+23.3%
Limited English Proficient	26.1%	30.4%	+4.3%
	Mathematics	Mathematics	2012/ 2013 +/-
Demographic Group	% Proficient and Above	% Proficient and Above	
Total Students	60.0%	59.1%	-0.9%
General Education	71.9%	70.6%	-1.3%
Special Education	20.0%	27.3%	+7.3%
Limited English Proficient	36.4%	39.1%	+2.7%

Academies at John F. Kennedy: Education and Training			
	2012	2013	
	Language Arts Literacy	Language Arts Literacy	2012/ 2013 +/-
Demographic Group	% Proficient and Above	% Proficient and Above	
Total Students	57.0%	75.2%	+18.2%
General Education	70.0%	90.8%	+20.8%
Special Education	50.0%	43.8%	-6.2%
Limited English Proficient	11.1%	34.8%	+23.7%
	Mathematics	Mathematics	2012/ 2013 +/-
Demographic Group	% Proficient and Above	% Proficient and Above	
Total Students	23.3%	28.1%	+4.8%
General Education	30.0%	35.6%	+5.6%
Special Education	8.3%	0.0%	-8.3%
Limited English Proficient	11.1%	17.4%	+6.3%

Academy High School			
	2012	2013	
	Language Arts Literacy	Language Arts Literacy	2012/ 2013 +/-
Demographic Group	% Proficient and Above	% Proficient and Above	
Total Students	53.3%	47.8%	-5.5%
General Education	60.9%	80.0%	+19.1%
Special Education	28.6%	9.5%	-19.1%
Limited English Proficient	0.0%	NA	NA
	Mathematics	Mathematics	2012/ 2013 +/-
Demographic Group	% Proficient and Above	% Proficient and Above	
Total Students	30.0%	28.9%	-1.1%
General Education	34.8%	48.0%	+13.2%
Special Education	14.3%	5.0%	-9.3%
Limited English Proficient	0.0%	NA	NA

***2012 results for Academy High School included the following Academies:

1. Sport Business Academy
2. Public Safety Academy

***2013 results for Academy High School included the following Academies:

1. Sport Business Academy
2. Public Safety Academy
3. STARS Academy
4. Out of District Placements

Rosa L. Parks School of Fine and Performing Arts			
	2012	2013	
	Language Arts Literacy	Language Arts Literacy	2012/ 2013 +/-
Demographic Group	% Proficient and Above	% Proficient and Above	
Total Students	85.4%	90.0%	+4.6%
General Education	84.6%	91.1%	+6.5%
Special Education	100.0%	80.0%	-20.0%
Limited English Proficient	100.0%	0.0%	-100.0%
	Mathematics	Mathematics	2011/ 2012 +/-
Demographic Group	% Proficient and Above	% Proficient and Above	
Total Students	69.1%	52.0%	-17.1%
General Education	67.3%	57.8%	-9.5%
Special Education	100.0%	0.0%	-100.0%
Limited English Proficient	100.0%	0.0%	-100.0%

Alternative High School			
	2012	2013	
	Language Arts Literacy	Language Arts Literacy	2012/ 2013 +/-
Demographic Group	% Proficient and Above	% Proficient and Above	
Total Students	32.6%	29.4%	-3.2%
General Education	48.0%	55.6%	+7.6%
Special Education	13.3%	0.0%	-13.3%
Limited English Proficient	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Mathematics	Mathematics	2011/ 2012 +/-
Demographic Group	% Proficient and Above	% Proficient and Above	
Total Students	8.3%	31.3%	+23.0%
General Education	15.4%	62.5%	+47.1%
Special Education	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Limited English Proficient	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

***2012 and 2013 results for Alternative High School included the following Academies:

1. Silk City 2000 Academy
2. Great Falls Academy
3. YES Academy
4. Destiny Academy

Going Forward: 2013-2014 District Transformation Initiatives

During the past two decades, the Paterson Public School District has been confronted with numerous obstacles and challenges that have impeded the provision of a high quality education to its diverse student population. These challenges have ranged from a culture of low expectations to low staff capacity to poor parent and community involvement.

The 2013-2014 school year begins the fifth year of implementing the district's strategic transformation plan, *Bright Futures*. The district has accomplished nearly all of its goals and we have realized many significant improvements in student academic outcomes. However, our work is far from done. We must remain focused on our vision to be the *statewide leader in urban education* and our mission to *prepare each student to be successful in the institution of higher education of his/her choosing, and in his/her chosen profession.*

We have built a solid foundation but we must continue to realize consistent, positive outcomes. As the district continues to move forward, we will focus on seven critical objectives:

1. Build a robust assessment system – which includes our planning for the launch of the 2014-2015 PARCC assessments;
2. Continue the implementation and training on the Common Core State Standards;
3. Build healthy school cultures;
4. Continue our efforts toward capacity building of teachers, principals and central office staff;
5. Continue the implementation of our Teacher & Principal Evaluation System;
6. Expand our high impact interventions to include initiatives focused on student attendance, and
7. Further efforts to ensure efficient operations.

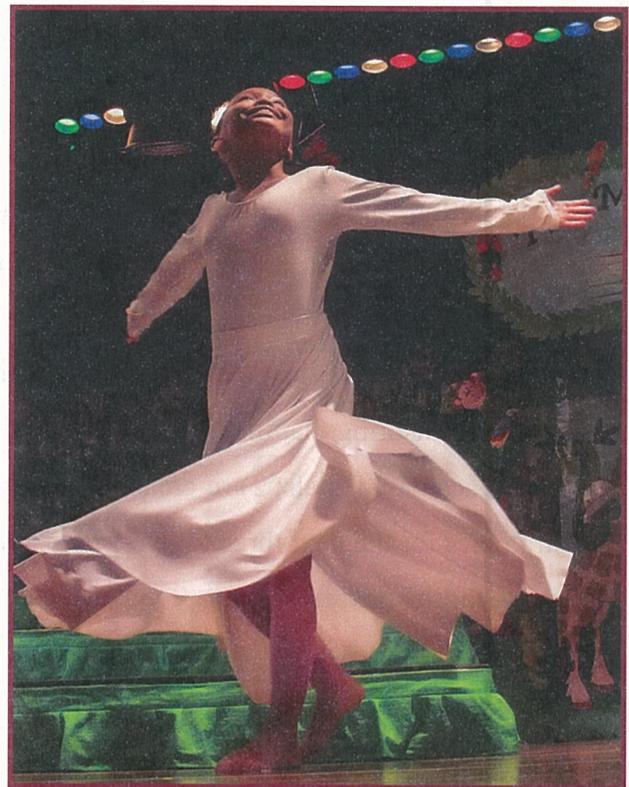
Additionally, to continue our forward momentum, we must achieve the following goals: 1) develop strategies for ensuring that the district is fiscally solvent for the next three to five years while continuing to meet its academic goals; 2) re-create or revise the district's strategic plan to include priorities, goals, and strategies for the next three to five years; and 3) create a facilities plan to address the district's facilities needs for the next five years.

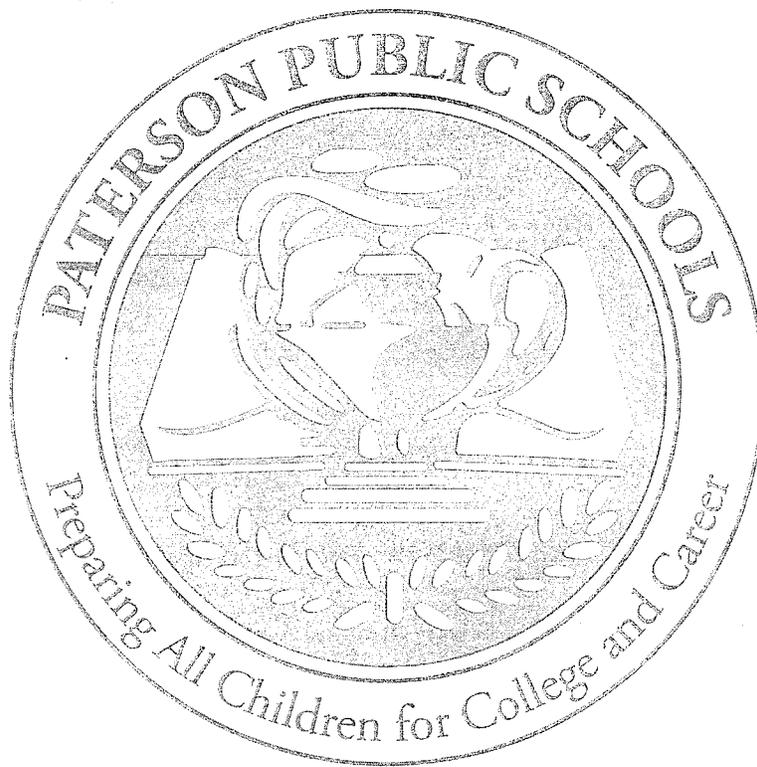
Illustration 4: District Transformation Initiatives

Robust Assessment System	Common Core	Healthy School Culture	Capacity Building	Teacher/Principal Evaluation	High Impact Interventions	Efficient Operations
Star Math & ELA	Univ. of Pittsburgh IFL	Effective Schools	Univ. of Pittsburgh IFL	Focal Point	Innovation Zone	Fiscal Cliff Planning
PARCC	Model Curriculum	NJPBSIS	K-3 Literacy Initiative	Leadership Institute	RAC	Five-Year Facilities Plan
		Elementary School Choice	School & District Restructuring & Re-staffing		End Social Promotion	Strategic Planning
		Principals' Autonomy	ELL Restructuring		Attendance Initiative	
			Special Education Restructuring		Graduation Enhancement	
					NJPBSIS	

Closing Comments

The Paterson Public School district has embarked upon a major effort to transform the system from a struggling and low performing urban district to one that is “a leader in educating New Jersey’s urban youth.” During the past four years (2009-2013), the district has implemented a number of transformation strategies and initiatives to build internal capacity, change its school and district cultures, and redesign critical process and procedures all aimed at improving outcomes for its students. As evidenced by increasing test scores, graduation rates, and college application admission rates, these and other initiatives have created forward movement toward the accomplishment of its mission to prepare all students for success in college and careers. With the help of our students’ parents and guardians, and the hard work of our highly dedicated staff, the children of Paterson are truly on a path to a brighter future.





New Jersey Senate Education Committee

Testimony March 24, 2014

Richard M. Kaplan

Senator Ruiz and members of the Senate Education Committee, my name is Richard Kaplan and I am the Superintendent of Schools in New Brunswick in Middlesex County.

I would like to thank you all for inviting us to speak today on the topic of NJ QSAC and the monitoring of our state's public schools.

I believe I hold a unique experiential background in this area. Firstly, I have served as a teacher, and administrator over the past 42 years all in New Jersey in suburban and urban school districts. Secondly, from 1982-1990 I served in a variety of senior leadership positions in our State Department of Education. Most germane to this discussion I served as the first Director of the Division of Compliance and Auditor General. We were responsible for creating Level III monitoring of New Jersey's most seriously deficient public schools and assisted in the process to create NJSA: 18A-7a et seq. during the mid-1980. This statute speaks to the evaluation process and outlines how state operated school districts are determined.

In two cases, under my term, the school districts of Jersey City and Paterson were recommended to become state districts. Later added was Newark and most recently Camden was added to that status.

Over these 34 years various Governors have come and gone, and legislators similarly have changed. The role of the federal government in state and local education issues have grown and changed as well.

One thing here in New Jersey has not. That is education is enumerated in our constitution as a STATE RESPONSIBILITY. This responsibility is delegated to local districts to operate in conformance and compliance with state statues and

Administrative Code as promulgated by the State Board of Education and by federal laws.

NJ QSAC is similarly contained in NJSA 18A:7A-10 and in NJAC 6A:30-2.1 et seq. through NJAC 30-9.1

To prepare for today's testimony I had conversations with former commissioners of education, I have learned a great deal about how the changes were made and what their goals were in order to assure both the Executive branch, the legislative branch and the New Jersey public that quality education is being offered our students.

"When NJQSAC was conceived the intent of the new monitoring system was to combine all monitoring systems, of which there were three (3), into one streamlined process that would apply to all schools. It was designed to access efficiently a district and if the district was performing well then it would have more latitude and time before the next review.

Alternatively, those districts not performing well would receive greater scrutiny and if necessary more support. Many of the people in the Senior Staff including the Commissioner who designed this system were no longer in the department of education when implementation was established."

Since that time NJQSAC has become something quite different. In fact, it has become akin to the original Thorough and Efficient (T&E) process designed in the mid 1970's that had grown to over 350 items to review.

However, NJQSAC has been lapsed but not withdrawn by a simple waiver by the most recent outgoing Commissioner who created the Regional Assessment Centers (RAC) without legislation but merely by an agreement with the US Department of Education and utilizing Race to the Top Funds. Also in the mix changing by fiat the existence of the County Superintendent's role as defined in statute.

The local districts now have two masters of evaluation, NJQSAC and RAC. As Lincoln stated so eloquently “a house divided cannot stand.”

Now that we have a new Commissioner of Education designee who is a known New Jersey educator, a former Commissioner and chief of staff of the department and more importantly a former Superintendent of Schools. He knows that policy decisions and direction are important but that implementation is the key to assuring its value and significance.

I believe with all of us working together and realizing the responsibilities we all face together to assure our children are receiving a quality education with the possibility of college and career readiness we can surely find a Single instrument to do just that.

Thank you for this opportunity to present my views and through the chair I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.



**TESTIMONY OF EDUCATION LAW CENTER ON
NJ QUALITY SINGLE ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM
SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

MARCH 24, 2014

Thank you, Senator Ruiz and members of the Senate Education Committee, for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the Education Law Center (ELC) on the State's monitoring framework for local school districts – the Quality Single Accountability System (QSAC). Our statement will focus on the substantial concerns that have arisen since 2011 over the Commissioner of Education's implementation of QSAC as it relates to Jersey City, Paterson, Newark and Camden – districts under State operation known under QSAC as districts with “full State intervention.”

QSAC was enacted in 2005 to overhaul the State's performance monitoring of districts. The statute established five separate areas of core district functions to be evaluated on three-year cycles – fiscal, operations, personnel, governance, and program and instruction – and established a uniform set of performance indicators for each area. The Act also established a benchmark score of 80 or above in each area as satisfactory, warranting no intervention by the Department of Education (DOE). For districts scoring below 80 in any area, QSAC requires a district- and DOE-approved improvement plan, with regular DOE review to ensure progress towards satisfactory performance.

QSAC also amended the State Takeover law in response to the call for a clear roadmap for the State to restore local control to Newark, Jersey City and Paterson, which at that time were well into their second decade of State operation. The statute fundamentally altered the “all or nothing” approach in the initial takeover law, by authorizing “partial withdrawal” when the district scored over 80 in one or more QSAC areas on its comprehensive evaluation, an incentive for districts to improve and restore control on an area by area basis. The Act also required the Commissioner to provide intensive technical assistance to spur improvement, along with six-month reviews to assess district progress towards achieving satisfactory performance, followed by State withdrawal. The Legislature's objective was clear: to have the Commissioner work

cooperatively with districts to boost performance to the satisfactory level and then withdraw, area by area, if necessary.

After enactment, the Corzine administration implemented QSAC in the takeover districts as intended by the Legislature. After achieving satisfactory performance scores, four areas were returned to local control in Jersey City – fiscal, personnel, governance and operations. In Newark, operations was returned in 2009 and, in 2011, the district was poised to regain control of fiscal, personnel and governance, having scored over 80 on the comprehensive evaluation. In 2011, Paterson scored over 80 in governance, expecting restoration of that crucial area. After two decades of State operation, district improvement and restoration of local control appeared to be on the near horizon.

When the Legislature enacted QSAC, no one could have foreseen what occurred when Governor Christie took office. Instead of working collaboratively with districts to improve and quickly exit, the Governor instead utilized State takeover to maintain control. His stated objective: advance his own preferred educational reforms in the takeover districts – increasing numbers of charter schools, merit pay, closing and selling schools and, most recently in Newark, the request for a waiver from tenure requirements. The Governor's intentions were made clear in March 2011, when he publicly stated that the State would run the Newark schools whether or not Newark achieved satisfactory performance under QSAC.

In Newark, despite having scored over 80 in fiscal, governance and personnel, Commissioner Cerf refused to withdraw from those areas. In Paterson, he similarly refused to withdraw from governance even though the district scored above 80. On appeal, these decisions were upheld because of the lack of clarity in the statute over the meaning of "sustained progress." However, the Commissioner did, in court, agree to return fiscal to Newark because the district had scored over 80, not just on the comprehensive evaluation, but on several prior progress reviews.

Thus, implementation of QSAC under the Christie Administration has turned State operation on its head. Because the Commissioner, in effect, is monitoring his own performance and has utilized the discretion afforded by the statute, takeover has become a means for State operation with no clear path to returning local control. In addition, the Commissioner has shown no interest over the last four years in cooperatively working with districts to improve under QSAC and then promptly restore local control on an area-by-area basis, as this Legislature intended.

It's time for the Legislature to step in and address this untenable situation. QSAC must be amended to ensure effectuation of the core legislative intent behind takeover – to

have DOE work with districts to improve as quickly as possible in order to achieve prompt restoration of local control. To accomplish this core objective, we recommend the following amendments to the QSAC statute:

- 1) Require that QSAC comprehensive evaluations and six-month progress reviews of districts under full State intervention be performed by an independent entity, under contract with the DOE. DOE should be required to issue RFP's for the independent entity, and obtain approval of the Joint Committee before selecting the outside evaluator. This would remove the inherent conflict of interest we now have where the Commissioner conducts QSAC evaluations and progress reviews of the State's own performance in operating the district.
- 2) Clarify the statute to make clear and unambiguous that achievement of satisfactory performance by scoring over 80 on the QSAC indicators on the comprehensive evaluation in any area requires the Commissioner to promptly restore local control over that area. The restoration of full voting authority in fiscal, operations, personnel, and program and instruction should not be dependent on the district's score in governance. Further, the statute needs a short time frame – no more than 3 months – for State withdrawal and restoration of control to the district, even in the area of governance.
- 3) The role of the Advisory Board must be clarified to specify that the Advisory Board should operate in the same manner as any other school board, including voting, except for the authority of the State Superintendent to veto any Advisory Board vote.
- 4) Clarify that the DOE progress reviews of implementation of the district's improvement plan must be conducted every six months and that, within one month of the review, the DOE must issue and make public the results of those reviews.
- 5) Enact the pending legislation that would give Advisory Boards the authority over whether to approve the closing of a district school.
- 6) Clarify that any application for a new charter school, or amendment to an existing charter, must be provided to the Advisory Board with an opportunity to file comments on the application.
- 7) Amend the Urban Hope Act to require Advisory Board approval for the district to submit an application for a renaissance school.

8) Amend QSAC to require the Commissioner to demonstrate a sustained lack of progress in implementing an improvement plan in any Order to Show Cause to initiate full or partial state intervention. The Commissioner should also be required to demonstrate the efforts made by the DOE to assist the district in making necessary improvements. The statute should make clear that State intervention is only permitted as a last resort and upon clear and convincing evidence that all other efforts by the State to improve the district's performance have failed.

State takeover was enacted as a means for the State to bring about expedited improvements in basic district operations, such as budgeting, governance, facilities and the like. These amendments are designed to restore QSAC and state takeover to this core mission, and put an end to improper use of "full state intervention" to further other education policies and reforms by indefinitely maintaining control for extended periods, now running into two decades in Jersey City, Paterson and Newark.

Thank you and we look forward to working with you on this critical issue.