

Learning Without Limits



Success will be realized through our leadership and our commitment to our vision!





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The New Jersey Association of School Administrators (NJASA) and the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association (NJPSA) represent educational practitioners and thought leaders throughout the state.

A core committee of educational leaders of these organizations began the task of examining Vision 2020, the NJASA blueprint for New Jersey public education.

The committee's goal was to revise and enhance the plan for the decade ahead to guide the work of the two organizations and their members in improving educational outcomes for New Jersey students.

The committee believed it essential to identify the knowledge and competencies required of students to be successful as citizens and contributors throughout their lifetime. This approach was a necessary first step to inform practices which create civil and inclusive school communities where children are respected, valued, and welcomed participants in defining desired learning practices and educational structures for New Jersey public schooling that will provide an effective education for each student.

More than a decade ago Tony Wagner of Harvard University worked to identify the seven skills that people will need to survive and thrive in the 21st century. He did this by interviewing hundreds of CEO's in business, non-profits, and educational institutions.

His work identified these seven survival skills.

Critical Thinking and Problem Solving.

People in their lives and in their work need to deal with vast amounts of information and a key skill is to figure out what's important and what's not, what's accurate and what's not. The ability to think and act quickly is a needed tool for the future.

Collaboration Across Networks and Leading by Influence.

In the new world of work, people work in teams, often virtual teams. Corporations are increasingly being organized around an authority and accountability structure that is less hierarchical and more reciprocal and relational.

Agility and Adaptability.

In the real world of work and life the "right" answers are not always apparent or may not even exist and, because things are constantly changing, people need to adapt and be able to deal with disruption. Students need to be comfortable with the idea of change and be willing to adapt to the changes around them.

Initiative and Entrepreneurship.

The world needs proactive self-starters who employ creativity in defining answers and solutions.

Effective Oral and Written Communication.

Employers demand "clear and concise" writing that "has focus, energy, and passion."

Accessing and Analyzing Information.

Accessing information is easy and essential in our digital age. Assessing its validity and relevance is critical to effectively work and live in the 21st century.

Curiosity and Imagination.

A strong desire to learn and the ability to be creative, innovative, and forward thinking are worker traits that employers value.

Robin Lake of the Center on Reinventing Public Education penned a 2019 article “Preparing Students for the Uncertain Future: Why America’s Educators are Ready to Innovate – but Their Education Systems Are Not.” Lake cites a series of reports published by the McKinsey Global Institute that conclude that the American economy and citizens face unprecedented change and uncertainty, concluding that “The new imperative of our automation age is the shift to a ‘learning economy,’ in which human capital is paramount. The future prosperity of our societies, and the well-being of our workforce, depend on whether we are able to attain that goal.”

Lake’s research analysis identifies trends which influence the skills and competencies most needed in the coming decades. They are:

There will be more of a premium on skills only the human mind possesses.

“Soft skills” – such as creative and collaborative problem solving, social skills, mature judgement, skepticism, and adaptability – will be more important than ever.

Automation will affect everyone but will create more problems for different groups.

Preschool preparation, k-12 quality, and access to advanced education and jobs will be not just a moral and civil rights issue, but will also take on practical urgency. Civic education will be more important than ever in a world where health, environmental, and population issues are increasingly complex.

We will need many more “creatives”, innovators, and effective leaders.

The realities and challenges ahead are complicated and will depend on leaders and innovators. We must find new, radically personalized ways to help every student to realize his/her untapped potential and problem-solving capacities of change and be willing to adapt to the changes around them.

Change will be the new normal.

Predicting individual jobs and skills and aligned training will require constant rethinking, evidence building, and adjustment.

Willard Daggett, founder of the International Center for Leadership in Education, highlights aspects of the changing world and learning needs of students. He challenges schools to be innovative and evolve to better develop the student attributes necessary to future success: responsibility, contemplation, initiative, perseverance, optimism, courage, respect, compassion, adaptability, honesty, trustworthiness, and loyalty. Recognizing this, he rightfully asks: “ If our students will need to be sophisticated lifelong learners in a technology-driven environment, shouldn’t that be the environment we create for them?”

This forward-thinking perspective about the profile of the prepared public school learner guided the work of the committee in developing Learning Without Limits: The Vision of NJASA and NJPSA for New Jersey Public Education.

Our Joint Vision for New Jersey Public Education Beyond 2020

New Jersey's educational leaders are proud of the wonderful progress we continue to make and the fact that we are living up to the true belief that "our children are our future." Although New Jersey was most recently ranked as the very best public education system in our country due to their scores on several national assessment reports, we must remain cognizant of what is necessary to maintain this recognition.

Together NJASA and NJPSA strive to ensure the best education for every child in the state, regardless of their geographic or socioeconomic status. Among the greatest challenges that exist for New Jersey schools as we endeavor to maintain that excellence are factors that destabilize the educational opportunities of our students, such as unpredictable changes to state mandates and graduation requirements in addition to inconsistent funding.

It is critical that the future of New Jersey education is adaptive, focused on issues of equity and personalized learning, and premised on developing ethical citizens who will better our state and world through their contributions. Our organizations are devoted to advocating for children and preparing educators to lead schools and districts in the direction of positive futures and to adapt to the changing needs of future generations. The children of New Jersey represent the future of our great state, and we share the responsibility to effectively educate all students through our public education system.

To that end, we continue to promote eight key factors:

- Personalized learning services and experiences that focus on high expectations, lead to lifelong learning, provide multiple pathways to academic achievement, and prepare students to pursue a wide array of career pathways.
- Investments in early childhood education to prepare all children for academic success.
- Multiple learning opportunities to accommodate the different learning rates, styles, and interests of all students.
- Social Emotional Learning (SEL) as a priority to address the needs of the whole child to ensure students develop the skills, attitudes, and values necessary to function effectively in society.
- Predictable and sufficient funding to ensure world-class performance.
- Ongoing and continuous professional learning support to promote the effectiveness of all educators.
- Appropriately designed and adequately maintained school facilities to accommodate and support positive learning environments and advances in technology.
- Integration of problem-solving and ethics in light of the adapting workforce needs and preparation to address the varying needs of the generations.



NJASA and NJPSA firmly believe that New Jersey's public education system begins with strong leadership that is effective and inspired to take students and educators into the future. Jack Welch shared, "Before you are a leader, success is all about growing yourself. When you become a leader, success is all about growing others." Jointly we are committed to spearheading the development of strong leaders, and we support eight key initiatives. NJASA and NJPSA will:

- Promote New Jersey's public education system in an effort to attract outstanding future educators.
- Attract promising leaders and advocate for the removal of barriers that serve to discourage candidates from entering the field of educational leadership, all while providing support to sustain the efforts of existing effective leaders throughout the state.
- Create the most positive and instructionally effective learning environments and resources that foster all students' academic achievements and maintain our deep philosophical commitment that our children are our future.
- Develop opportunities and support the professional learning of all educators and support staff.
- Work closely with colleges and universities that offer administrative certification and focus on the admission of highly qualified candidates. We will actively mentor these individuals, with a focus on contemporary issues and the shaping of a framework for effective decision-making.
- Provide our members with the support and up-to-date learning resources required for understanding and managing the complexities of balancing competing interests.
- Engage all school community members – students, parents/guardians, educators, support staff, administrators, central office, and board of education members - and keep them informed by providing clear and continuous communication on a regular and timely basis regarding public education.
- Respect each community's ability to support their schools and reinforce their values and expectations to provide outstanding learning experiences for all students.

Key Challenges Which Limit Educational Leaders

As educational leaders we must remain focused on our one goal: deliver a high-quality education to every New Jersey student attending public school in the state. To achieve this goal, we must aggressively address these eight formidable but not unsurmountable key challenges:

- Economic factors besieging families have created growing income disparities that negatively impact students' readiness to learn, access to educational opportunities, and the ability to fully participate in technological growth.
- The pool of highly qualified and certified leaders positioned to effectively replace current leaders needs to become more diversified and robust.
- Unpredictable changes to federal and state mandates impact graduation requirements and restrict creativity.
- Legislative mandates divert both fiscal and human resources from the primary mission of educating children.
- Political rhetoric and actions detract from a collaborative effort of bipartisan support for public education.
- Public education is portrayed in a way that belies its importance to our future.
- Funding of New Jersey public schools is insufficient and unable to meet the legislatively derived and judicially acknowledged funding formula.
- The Digital Divide still exists, and the gap between those who have access to technology and those who do not needs to be eliminated.



Our Vision to Limitless Learning

Our vision is to create the finest educational environments and learning-enriched opportunities within the New Jersey public education system, and to prepare our students to compete effectively on a global employment stage. The four key categories to continually transform our system and ensure future success that need our attention are Environment, Classrooms, Culture, and Standards.

Environment

We must:

- Create a safe learning environment - doing so must be our first priority. But we must also generate appropriate funding for designing and maintaining educational opportunities that satisfy the learning challenges of our students, which may also include reorganizing school schedules and expanding the school day, year, and campus in order to support various pathways while providing for mentoring and field experiences.
- Generate and sustain stakeholder involvement.
- Emphasize education transformation, the importance of lifetime learning, and the development of professional learning communities that support critical thinking and problem solving.
- Address challenges that influence culture, such as increasing district autonomy, eliminating unnecessary regulations, and implementing pilot teacher and leader compensation programs.

Classrooms

We must:

- Personalize classroom instruction and develop challenging curricula with a focus on project-based instruction affording students an outlet for creativity, with expanded early childhood education and improved digital learning to provide for greater collaboration prospects, which are essential for implementing and fulfilling globally competitive standards.

Standards

We must:

- Continually review and revise student, teacher and leader performance evaluation systems and assessments to adapt to the perpetual changes in education.
- Improve the accountability and evaluation system for school district performance.

Culture

We must:

- Attract, develop, support, and retain the highest-quality and diverse teachers, administrators, and chief education officers who are reflective of our state's diverse population.



Our Goals for Learning Without Limits

Our plan to address these new learning challenges and deliver a world-class educational experience to each and every child in New Jersey encompasses 13 comprehensive steps:

- Create a safe, secure and orderly learning environment that forms the basis for all student academic, psychological, social, artistic and athletic development which encourages initiative and entrepreneurship.
- Provide access to early childhood learning that includes universal pre-kindergarten and full-day kindergarten for all children.
- Provide access to year-round academic intervention services to address and mitigate achievement gaps between and among learners and groups of learners.
- Ensure access to technology devices, resources, and internet access for all public school students.
- Develop a robust and challenging curriculum for all content areas that is infused with digital learning opportunities, characterized by instructional delivery designed to be responsive to a wide array of learning styles, stresses effective communication skills, and promotes critical thinking.
- Assess student progression and base it upon skill acquisition and assessment that reflect both written and “hands-on” methodologies by providing access to information which allows for in-depth analysis.
- Design assessments that consistently and continually assist teachers in analyzing student growth and identifying concepts and skills yet to be mastered.
- Develop instruction to reflect “teacher-directed,” “student-facilitated” and “learner-centered” approaches that infuse theoretical constructs and practical applications in a technology driven environment with a STEAM and humanities focus.
- Establish an instructional approach that emphasizes creativity, discovery, self-initiative, persistence, and a spirit of lifelong learning.
- Partner with institutions of higher education, businesses, government agencies, entrepreneurial companies, and individuals to provide students a broad-based connection between learning and life to foster initiative and a desire for entrepreneurship and the design and integration of theoretical and practical uses of technology.
- Attract and promote highly qualified diverse teachers with strong interpersonal skills - they are the centerpiece for every learning environment.
- Redesign teacher preparation programs to reflect an even-handed participation of all professional stakeholders — higher education, educational leaders, teachers, and teacher educators.
- Revise teacher and administrator evaluation systems and design them to value both quantitative and qualitative student outcomes to ensure the development of “creative/innovative/forward thinking” and “socially/emotionally responsible” young citizens.

No Limit to Success

Schools of the future will look very different than our schools of today. Technologies will be integrated seamlessly and a broad range of tools will be used for teaching and learning within and beyond the boundaries of brick and mortar schools.

Equally important will be the consistent implementation of evaluation systems that include metrics of performance. Success will be realized through student performance, which will be assessed through valid and reliable instruments designed to continually inform the teaching and learning process and also encourage teachers to adjust as appropriate. Curricula will be implemented with fidelity and will be centered on problem-solving and critical-thinking skills.

Our schools will reflect a positive and supportive culture centered on student initiative and success, and decisions will be the result of a collaborative process grounded in the guiding principles of what is best for each student. The role of the teacher will successfully transition to identifying student strengths, interests, and values in order to direct them in areas where they need guidance to be innovators.

A new model of professional learning will reflect sustained, ongoing training and support for teachers and leaders as they learn new strategies of best practices that will focus on developing students who are creative thinkers and problem solvers. The professional learning communities will be actively engaged with opportunities for modeling and practice in a cycle of continuous improvement.

We will know we have been successful when all facets of the school community are engaged as partners and they share their satisfaction with the performance metrics. Communication among the systems within our communities will be evident and student-centered.

Success will be realized when all our schools offer safe and secure environment in which student feel comfortable and secure in their physical, emotional, and psychological well-being and become critical contributing members of the global society.

**New Jersey public education
will be successful when
students graduate
who possess:**

- A persistent and passionate mind.
- The curiosity to continually ask questions and perform “what if” experiments.
- The passion and perseverance to pursue and achieve their long-term goals.
- The ability to imagine the world they want to live in and the skills to create it.



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NJ  Association of
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 Education &
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 **NJPSA**
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