

Our Children... Our Future

vision



2020





Our Value, Our Vision, Our Needs

New Jersey consistently ranks as one of the best public education systems in our country, and scores higher than nearly every state in a number of national assessment reports.

We should all be proud of the wonderful progress we've made and the fact that we are living up to the true belief that "our children are our future." But we must also be aware that this ranking could change overnight, negatively impacting our school systems and putting New Jersey students at risk and jeopardy.

It's unfortunate, and even sad, but our entire society today, more than ever, is engaged in constant arguments and debate, especially when it comes to important issues related to public education. It's rare when we find educators, politicians and concerned parents all in agreement and void of dissent. There is no state where this disagreement is more apparent than here in New Jersey. Yet it seems like everyone universally believes and accepts our children are our future. As an organization, the New Jersey Association of School Administrators (NJASA) strives to ensure the best education for each and every child in the state, regardless of their geographic or socioeconomic status. To that end, we continue to promote eight key factors:

- The recognition of many different and rigorous paths to academic achievement, all of which lead to lifelong learning and careers;
- Predictable and sufficient funding to ensure world-class performance;
- Ongoing and continuous professional development support to maintain the effectiveness of all educators;
- Multiple learning opportunities and additional learning time to accommodate the different learning rates and learning styles of children;
- Investments in early childhood education to prepare children for academic success;
- Appropriately designed and adequately maintained school facilities to accommodate and support positive learning environments and advances in technology;
- Services that focus on high expectations and emphasize individualized outcomes in order to maximize the achievement of special needs youngsters; and
- Governance policies and practices that enhance trust and foster collaboration, communication and coordination.

The NJASA has a long and proud tradition of advocating for children and preparing leaders to steer schools and districts in the direction of positive futures. The children of New Jersey represent the future of our great state, and we have the responsibility to effectively educate all students through our public education system.



The Value of Strong Leadership

Tim Waters stated, "At no time in recent memory has the need for effective and inspired leadership been more pressing than it is today. The importance of truly effective educational leadership is clear, and the time for improving schools is short." (School Leadership that Works (2005) Marzano, Waters, and McNulty) NJASA firmly believes that the public education system in New Jersey begins with strong leadership that is poised to take students and teachers into the future.

NJASA is committed to spearheading the development of strong leaders, and we support eight key initiatives. NJASA will:

- Work closely with colleges and universities that offer administrative certification and focus on the admission of highly qualified candidates only. We will actively mentor these individuals, with a focus on contemporary issues and the shaping of a framework for effective decision-making.
- Continue to 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.
- Pledge to continue creating the most positive and instructionally effective learning environments and resources that foster a student's academic achievements and maintain our deep philosophical commitment and position that our children are our future.
- Provide our members with the support and up-to-date learning resources required for understanding and managing the complexities of balancing competing interests.
- Respect each community's ability to financially support their schools and reinforce their values and expectations to provide outstanding learning experiences for all students.
- Engage the community, and provide clear and continuous communication on a regular and timely basis regarding school performance and school needs. Abraham Lincoln long ago reminded us of the following: "Public sentiment is everything. With public sentiment, nothing can fail; without it, nothing can succeed." This thinking may be truer today than ever before.
- Promote New Jersey's public education system in an effort to attract outstanding future educators.
- Develop opportunities and support the professional development of teachers, administrators and support staff.



Key Challenges for Chief Education Officers

The many challenges we face as chief education officers are formidable. But we can never take our eye off the number 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 seven key challenges.

- There is a lack of sufficient funding of New Jersey public schools in order to meet the legislatively derived and judicially acknowledged funding formula.
- 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.
- There is a never-ending tide of legislative mandates that 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.
- There is a portrayal that public education belies its importance and serves to build mistrust among parents and other taxpayers.
- There is a steady loss of experienced leaders; they are moving to escape New Jersey-imposed barriers to advancement and fair compensation.
- The pool of highly qualified and certified leaders positioned to effectively replace current leaders has been reduced.

Our Vision for Public Education in 2020 and Beyond

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

Classrooms

We must:

- Continually personalize classroom instruction and develop challenging curricula, with expanded early childhood education and digital learning, which is essential for implementing and fulfilling globally competitive standards.

Standards

We must:

- Continually review and revise leader, teacher and student performance evaluation systems and assessments to properly address the perpetual changes in education, including a revision of tenure and seniority; and
- Improve the statewide accountability and evaluation system for school district performance.

Culture

We must:

- Achieve high educational standards by attracting, developing, supporting and retaining the highest-quality teachers, principals and district leaders;

- Generate parent, student and community involvement;
- Emphasize and reinforce education transformation, the importance of lifetime learning and the development of professional learning communities; and
- Address challenges that influence culture, such as increasing district autonomy; eliminating unnecessary regulations; and implementing pilot teacher and leader compensation programs.

Environment

We must:

- Create a safe and orderly learning environment – doing so must be our first priority. But we must also generate sufficient funding for designing and maintaining school facilities that satisfy the learning challenges of our children, which may also include reorganizing school schedules and expanding the school day and year.

Our Plan

NJASA has a 12-step plan to address these new learning challenges and deliver a world-class educational experience to each and every child in New Jersey.

- Create a safe, secure and orderly learning environment that forms the basis for all student academic, psychological, social, artistic and athletic development.
- 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.
- Develop a robust and challenging curriculum for all content areas that is infused with digital learning opportunities and characterized by instructional delivery designed to be responsive to a wide array of learning styles.
- Reevaluate student progression and base it upon skill acquisition and assessment that reflect both written and “hands-on” methodologies.
- Design assessments that assist teachers in analyzing student growth and reteaching 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.
- 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.
- Attract and promote highly qualified 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, NJASA, 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 “academically able” and “socially/emotionally responsible” young citizens.





Measuring Success

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

Equally important will be the consistent implementation of evaluation systems that include metrics of performance and graduation rates; college (and other post-high school programs) acceptance data; levels of student engagement, such as attendance and participation rates; and levels of success as an employee. School-to-school comparisons will only be meaningful among similar schools.

Success will be realized through student performance, which will be assessed through valid and reliable instruments designed to inform the teaching and learning process and also encourage teachers to adjust as appropriate. Curricula will be implemented with fidelity and will be accurately aligned with standards centered on higher-order thinking skills.

Our schools will reflect a positive and supportive culture centered on student success, and decisions will be the result of a collaborative process grounded in the guiding principles of what is best for students.

A new model of professional development 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 development communities will be actively engaged with opportunities for modeling and practice in a cycle of continuous improvement. And, staff attendance and turnover will be stable to ensure consistent student support over time.

We will know we have been successful when parents 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 environments in which students feel comfortable and secure on all levels, including physical, emotional and psychological.

*Success will be realized
through our leadership
and our vision.*



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