

# NEW JERSEY SCHOOLS

A FRAMEWORK FOR

# EXCELLENCE

SHORT-TERM GOALS

# 2014

A 2014 JERSEYCAN REPORT

# NEW JERSEY SCHOOLS: A FRAMEWORK FOR EXCELLENCE

## SHORT-TERM GOALS

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# Introduction

In the movement for great New Jersey schools, we talk often about where the education system stands (our starting point), and where it should be (our destination). We know our kids deserve better than the status quo, which is failing to prepare many of our young minds for the world after 12<sup>th</sup> grade and often leaves behind the neediest students.

In fact, our kids deserve more than “better.” Our kids deserve the best.

Thanks to volumes of research and a sharpening focus on the critical role that education plays in the success of communities small and large, we even know how the “best” can look: engaged kids, involved families, effective teachers, strong school leaders, vibrant and innovative classrooms, high standards, preschool and more.

## ***But how do we get there?***

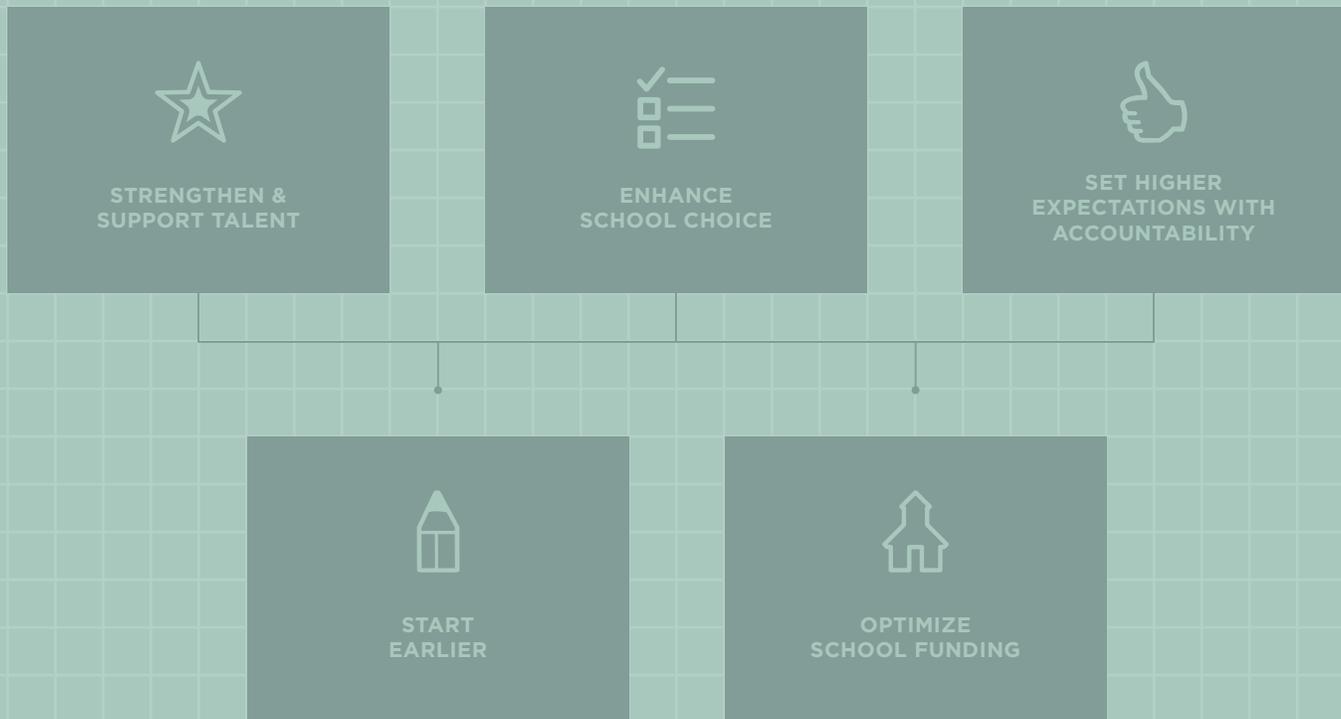
In this publication, *New Jersey Schools: A Framework for Excellence—Short-Term Goals*, we seek to answer that question, with a focus on goals we can achieve in the next one to three years. It’s our hope that community and philanthropic leaders, advocates and policymakers will read these policy recommendations in conjunction with our more comprehensive *New Jersey Schools: A Framework for Excellence*. Taken together, these documents provide a seven-to-10-year perspective on improving schools and outline changes in education policy that are critically needed to boost student achievement, narrow the state’s disturbing achievement gaps and raise the bar for all kids. These reforms are intended to benefit students across the state, but in some cases are most sorely needed in persistently struggling districts and schools.

Think of these complementary documents as a map toward real, sustainable, positive change.

When it comes to short-term goals, we have narrowed our focus to issues that appear to have some momentum to change in coming years: 1) Strengthen and support talent, 2) Enhance school choice and 3) Set higher expectations with accountability.

The long-term companion document provides an even more robust set of recommendations that includes expanding and improving early childhood education and optimizing school funding. Our research indicates that high-quality preschool and more efficient and effective investments in public education are just as important factors for great schools as strengthening and supporting talent, enhancing school choice and setting higher expectations with accountability. But given the complexity of both issues and the current climate in New Jersey,

## All policy areas addressed by *New Jersey Schools: A Framework for Excellence*



it appears likely that a longer timeframe will be needed to address these two areas. If there are ways to address early childhood education or optimizing school funding sooner, we will welcome them and work to address them on an earlier timeframe.

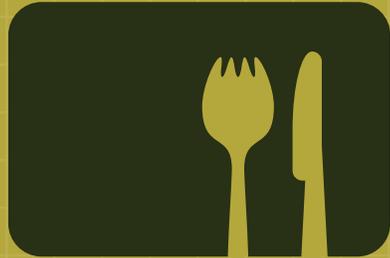
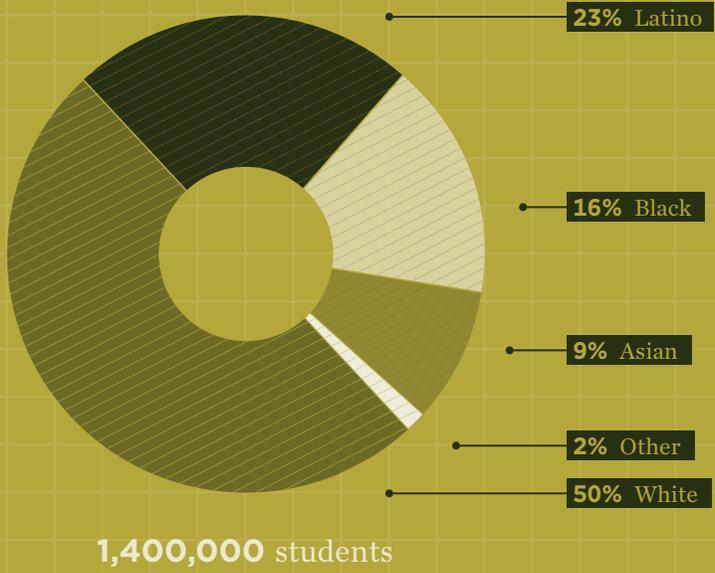
The *Framework* marks the culmination of more than 70 interviews that JerseyCAN conducted in 2013 throughout New Jersey. We met with state and local officials, members of the New Jersey Department of Education, school leaders, education reform organizations, teachers, students and families. We listened closely. We identified common themes. We gave deep thought to everyone's concerns.

What follows is our best thinking on how to get from where we stand to where our schools need to be. Because it's not enough to dream. We need a plan if we're serious about making great schools a reality for all New Jersey kids.

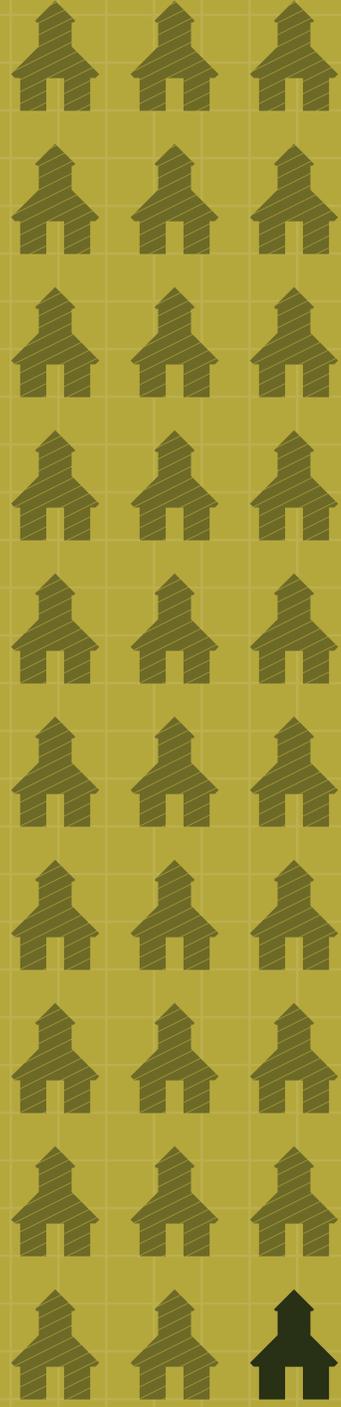
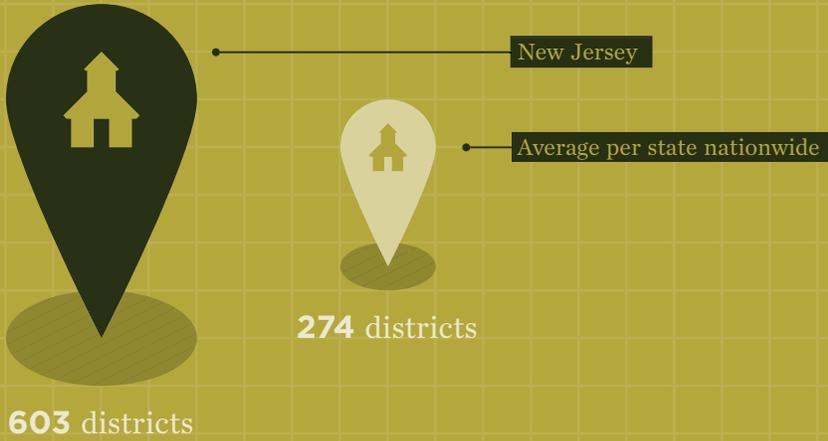
# Summary of short- and longer term policy recommendations

	Short-term	Longer term
<b>1 Start earlier</b>		<p>Expand access to preschool</p> <hr/> <p>Create a preschool quality rating system</p> <hr/> <p>Expand access to full-day kindergarten</p>
<b>2 Strengthen and support talent</b>	<p>Repeal the residency requirement</p> <hr/> <p>Strengthen teacher preparation and professional development</p> <hr/> <p>Reform layoff criteria</p> <hr/> <p>Reward the best teachers</p>	<p>Cultivate, train and support education leaders</p> <hr/> <p>Fully implement the teacher evaluation system</p>
<b>3 Enhance school choice</b>	<p>Overhaul the charter school law</p>	<p>Create an Achievement School District</p> <hr/> <p>Help families cover the costs of education</p>
<b>4 Set higher expectations with accountability</b>	<p>Raise the bar with the Common Core State Standards and related assessments</p>	<p>Use technology to improve educational outcomes, including use of data-driven instruction</p> <hr/> <p>Adopt best practices for school closure</p>
<b>5 Optimize school funding</b>		<p>Report publicly on relationship between spending and performance</p> <hr/> <p>Consolidate and share district services</p> <hr/> <p>Phase out adjustment aid under SFRA as planned</p>

# New Jersey's schools & students



More than **380,000** children participated in the free and reduced lunch program in 2012.



**2,492** public schools;  
**87** are charter schools

## Regional comparison of average per-pupil spending, 2009–2010



## New Jersey today

2

Broader trends in New Jersey suggest that failure to provide children with a great education will have a negative impact on both our state’s economic viability and the overall well-being of our citizens. Providing all of New Jersey’s children with a high-quality education will translate into enormous benefits, including increased individual earning power, greater employability and a workforce that meets the demand of a globalized economy. For example, in New Jersey, the median wage of an individual with a bachelor’s degree is \$26,000 more than that of a high school graduate.<sup>1</sup> In fact, in New Jersey, the unemployment rate of individuals with bachelor’s degrees is four points lower than that of high school graduates.<sup>2</sup> Nationally, between 1998 and 2008, more than 10 million jobs were created for those with a college degree, while 600,000 were lost for those that did not require a high school diploma.<sup>3</sup>

We don’t just need more college graduates; we need individuals who have the skills that match the needs of New Jersey’s economy. This means, among other things, a greater emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, which are skills that, while currently in high-demand by business leaders in New Jersey, are lacking in the present workforce. It is estimated that there are 1.4 jobs in STEM for every one unemployed person in the state.<sup>4</sup> To sustain and grow New Jersey’s economy, we need to make sure the next generation of workers is prepared with instruction that emphasizes 21st century skill sets.

## New Jersey's NAEP ranking, 2013 (average scale scores)

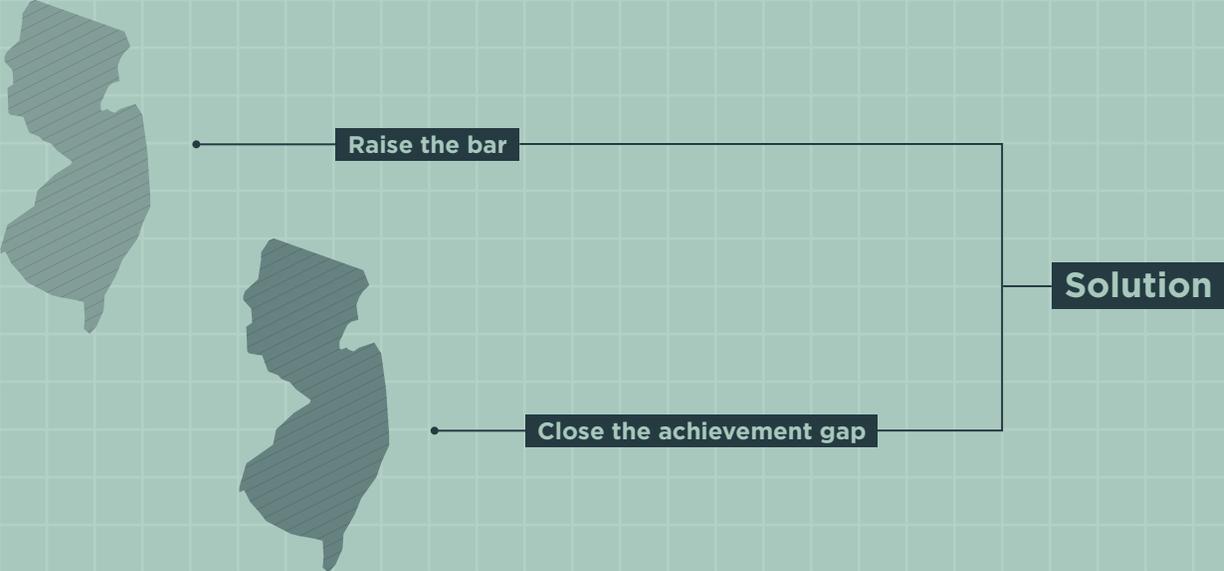
Subject area	Fourth grade	Eighth grade
 READING	2 <sup>nd</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>
 MATH	4 <sup>th</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>

To some extent, we've already recognized the importance of investing in education in New Jersey. Each year we invest about \$25 billion in our public school system.<sup>5</sup> New Jersey has the third-highest per-pupil spending in the country.<sup>6</sup> On average, New Jersey spent \$16,841 per-pupil during the 2009–2010 school year, compared to the national average of \$10,615.<sup>7</sup> In fact, New Jersey's per-pupil spending is even higher when we take into account the investment the state makes in teachers' pensions and benefits; including these costs, the New Jersey Department of Education estimates that state per-pupil spending is closer to \$18,000.<sup>8</sup>

In certain respects, this investment has paid off. Take student academic achievement, for example. New Jersey has some of the highest average test scores in the country, having earned top marks on the 2013 National Assessment of Academic Progress. Since 2003, New Jersey has seen a 16-percentage point increase in eighth-grade math proficiency, one of the highest proficiency gains in the country.<sup>9</sup> Our fourth-grade students now rank second in the nation in reading performance, and fourth in math performance. Eighth-graders rank second for math and first for reading.<sup>10</sup>

Other measures tell a similarly positive story. New Jersey ranks second in the country for providing 3-year-olds with access to early

# A two-pronged solution for education challenges in New Jersey

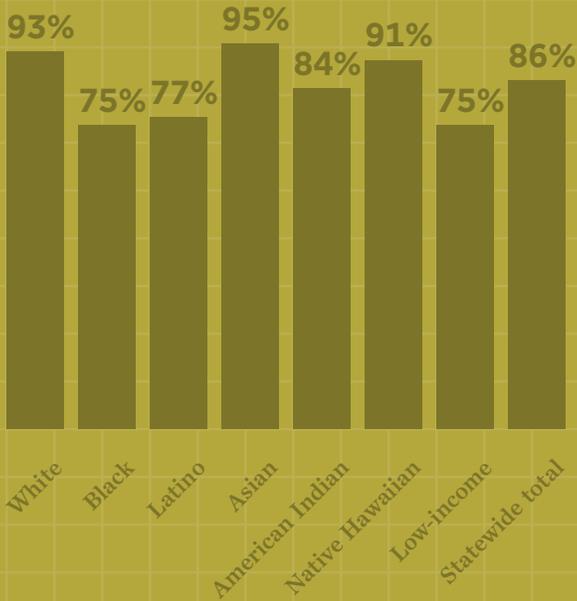


## NAEP proficiency gaps (in percentage points)

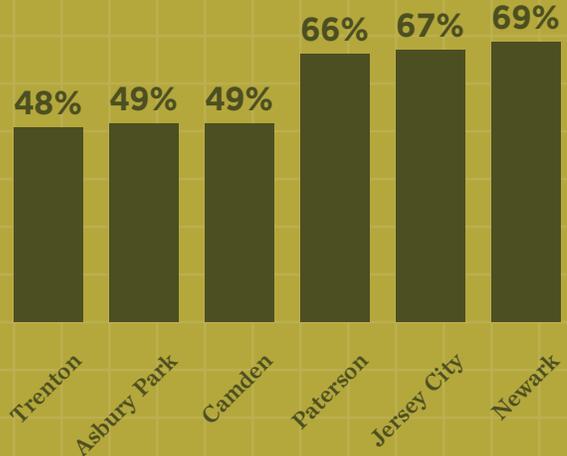
Subject area	Grade	Black/white gap	Latino/white gap	Low-income/ non-low-income gap
 READING	4 <sup>th</sup>	30	31	34
	8 <sup>th</sup>	29	24	31
 MATH	4 <sup>th</sup>	37	31	37
	8 <sup>th</sup>	34	24	32

## New Jersey high school graduation rates, 2012

Student



District

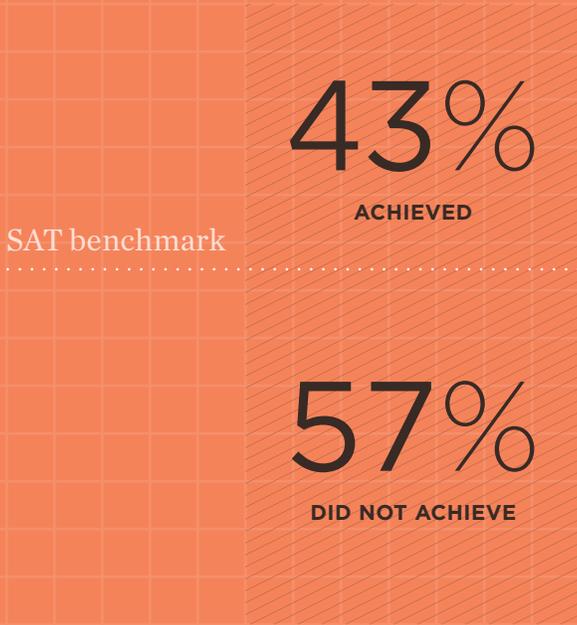


childhood programs.<sup>11</sup> New Jersey has also garnered national recognition for its high school graduation rates: 86 percent of our students graduated on time in 2012.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, 73 percent of students in New Jersey who took at least one Advanced Placement exam in the 2012–2013 school year scored a three or higher.<sup>13</sup>

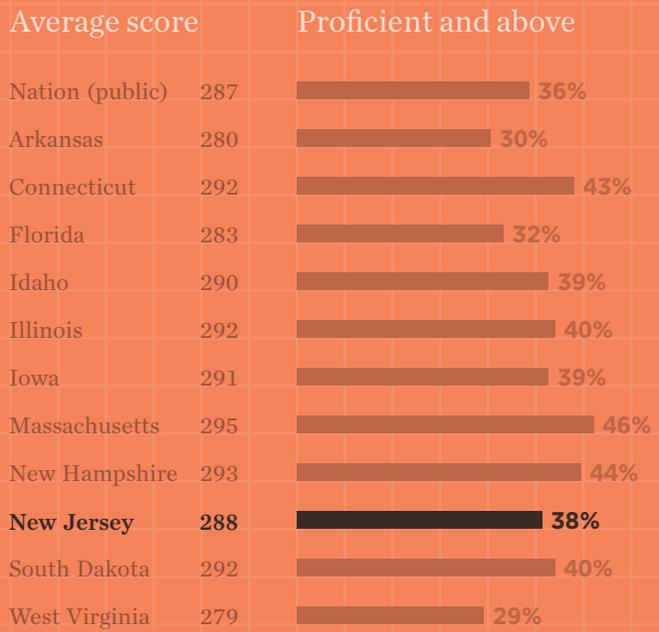
Yet those accolades mask a more troubling story. Here in New Jersey, we have two simultaneous and equally important challenges that have to be addressed: We need to raise the bar so that all students across the state are fully prepared to compete in the global economy, and we have to meet the needs of students with the greatest challenges so that a child's race or ZIP code will no longer be the best predictor of his or her success. We need a two-pronged approach to address both of these areas.

Underneath the impressive statistics about our overall performance, there are disturbing achievement gaps in New Jersey that have persisted for some time. Here's a snapshot: black, Latino and low-income students trail behind their white and more affluent peers in both

**SAT college and career benchmark** (student performance nationwide)



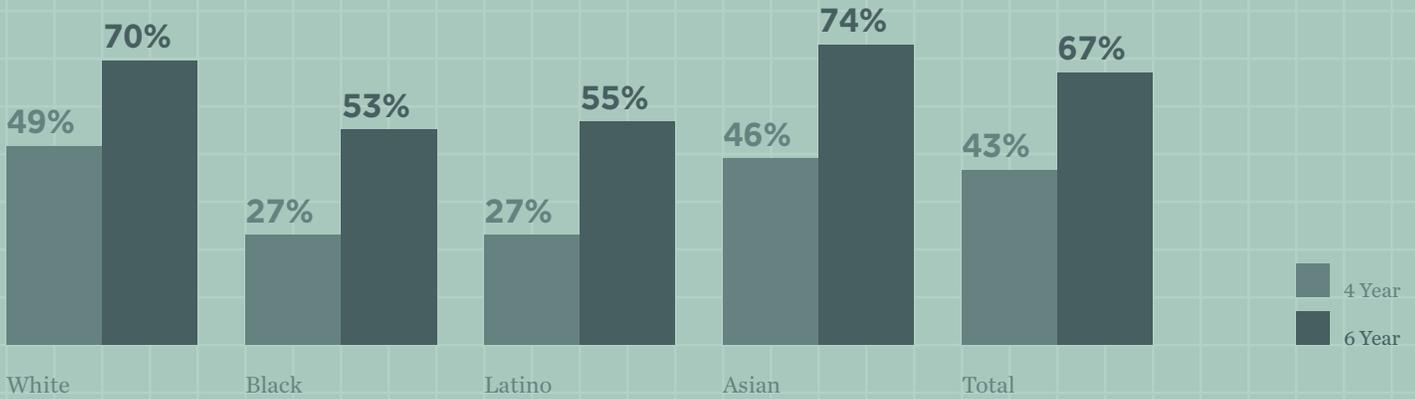
**12<sup>th</sup> grade NAEP reading** (average proficiency percentages)



reading and math proficiency levels.<sup>14</sup> In the most recent data available from the 2013 National Assessment of Educational Progress, New Jersey’s achievement gaps continue to persist. In fourth-grade math, the percentage of black students who scored at a level of proficient or above is 37 percentage points behind their white peers. Latino students lag 31 percentage points behind white students. And on the eighth-grade reading assessment, black students are 30 percentage points behind their white peers and low-income students trail 34 percentage points behind their non-low-income peers. While there was notable progress at closing the gap for Latino students at the eighth grade level, this progress was not consistently seen across other groups or at the fourth grade level.<sup>15</sup>

These inequities emerge in other metrics, as well. While New Jersey’s overall high school graduation rates are considered strong, with 86 percent of students graduating on time, we see large gaps upon deeper analysis: 93 percent of white students graduated on time in New Jersey,

## New Jersey public college and university graduation rates



compared with only 75 percent of black students, 77 percent of Latino students and only 75 percent of economically disadvantaged students.<sup>16</sup>

Similarly, when we look beneath state trends and at the circumstances in some specific urban areas in New Jersey, we find further evidence of disconcerting inequities. On-time high school graduation rates in our most challenged school districts are alarming. In Asbury Park, Trenton and Camden, fewer than 50 percent of students graduated on time in 2012. In Jersey City, Paterson and Newark, fewer than 70 percent of students made it to graduation in four years.<sup>17</sup>

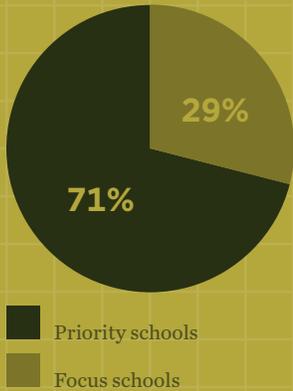
Not only are New Jersey schools failing to educate wide swaths of low-income students, students of color and students in urban districts, we are generally failing to set the bar high enough to ensure that all students are college- and career-ready. We can't be complacent with this level of mediocrity.

Overall, *more than half* of New Jersey students are considered unprepared for success in college and the workforce based on NAEP benchmarks. On the 12th-grade NAEP, only 38 percent of New Jersey's students were considered college- and career-ready.<sup>18</sup> This pattern rings true on the national level as well; on the 2012 SAT, only 43 percent of students met the appropriate target.<sup>19</sup> We must not allow this to continue.

College and career readiness is an issue for students across the state, but it's an even greater challenge for students who are falling the

## Priority and Focus schools

**249**  
Priority and Focus  
schools



**109** of those schools are concentrated in the urban areas noted below. These Priority and Focus schools serve nearly **67,000** students.

District	Number of Priority & Focus schools	Number of students in Priority & Focus schools	Total number of students in the district
Newark	29	16,160	36,430
Paterson	24	15,310	24,570
Camden	22	11,510	12,610
Trenton	18	10,050	12,130
Jersey City	16	13,920	27,030

furthest behind. Fewer than 10 percent of Newark’s SAT test-takers met the college readiness benchmark. In Camden, just 1.4 percent of students met the benchmark, and in Asbury Park no one did.<sup>20</sup>

College remediation rates serve to reinforce the gravity of this growing issue. At Rutgers University, for instance, one in three students required remediation.<sup>21</sup> At Bergen and Essex County Community Colleges, 90 percent of the students required remediation.<sup>22</sup> Students required remediation in as many as three areas: reading, writing, and math, and only one in four students who takes remedial courses graduates in eight years.<sup>23</sup> Meanwhile, students must successfully complete remediation coursework before they can take courses that count towards graduation. Thus, remediation increases the overall cost of a college education. This carries significant financial consequences for both students and families.<sup>24</sup>

**Graphic:** In 2010, Governor Christie stated there were 104,000 students in chronically failing schools. Based on the new categories created in the New Jersey State Department of Education waiver and publically available enrollment data, we established there are 170,000 students in Priority and Focus schools across the state. Figures are rounded.

Inequities continue to persist in college completion rates. Only 27 percent of black and Latino students who started college in the fall of 2005 graduated within four years. Even when we look at six-year graduation rates, Latino and black students lag significantly behind their white peers.<sup>25</sup>

Yet another indicator of the challenges we face is the number of schools the New Jersey Department of Education has flagged for dramatic improvement. Currently, there are 249 Priority and Focus schools statewide, Priority schools being the state's bottom 5 percent in terms of student learning, while Focus schools are home to notably wide achievement gaps. Collectively these struggling schools serve more than 170,000 students.<sup>26</sup> We cannot accept those numbers. We cannot accept those numbers. We must address the issues that prevail at these schools.

When our kids leave high school unprepared for college and career success, they're dramatically less likely to succeed in the global economy, and our country is far more likely to continue its international backslide. We are lagging already. While average student performance levels are often used to measure and compare how well citizens around the globe are being prepared by their nation's education systems, it is also important to look at the rate at which student performance is improving in each country. Twenty-four other countries surpass the United States' rate of improvement in student performance. If this pattern continues, a recent study projects, we will never catch up to the "leaders of the industrialized world."<sup>27</sup> Additionally, on the Programme for International Student Assessment, which assesses critical thinking in math, literacy and science, the United States falls in the middle of the pack.<sup>28</sup>

Our kids deserve better. Our kids, each and every one of them, deserve access to schools that set high expectations, meet their personal learning needs and prepare them for lifelong success.

Fortunately, there's hope. By revamping our existing education system and putting in place a series of research-backed policies that better suit the needs of our kids, our families and our educators, we believe that New Jersey has the power to create an environment for excellent schools to thrive.

As noted above, our long-term vision for great schools spans five major policy areas: 1) Strengthen and support talent, 2) Enhance school choice, 3) Set higher expectations with accountability, 4) Start earlier and 5) optimize school funding. In our comprehensive companion document, additional recommendations in each of these areas are enumerated to guide policymakers, community leaders and other partners over the next seven to 10 years as we work to give all our kids what they deserve: a true shot at success in excellent schools.

## Where to begin

A meaningful transformation doesn't happen overnight. Yet there are short-term opportunities for New Jersey to make headway in the movement for great schools. Here are some recommendations for advocates and policymakers to pursue between now and 2016 to lay a strong foundation for future reforms:

### STRENGTHEN AND SUPPORT TALENT

We must dramatically improve how we train and support New Jersey's teachers, school leaders, school board members, business administrators and other school personnel. This includes the creation of a high performance culture for teachers and school staff.

### ENHANCE SCHOOL CHOICE

We must expand the number of high-quality school options for families and students in New Jersey, starting by overhauling New Jersey's 18-year-old charter school law.

### SET HIGHER EXPECTATIONS WITH ACCOUNTABILITY

We must set clear, high expectations for what students should be learning at each grade level, and then hold superintendents, principals, school leaders, administrators, teachers and school board members accountable for meeting those expectations.

Below are specific policy changes that New Jersey should enact in these areas and the benefits that students, teachers and communities would see, especially in the most underserved areas. Many of these recommendations build on recent policy changes at the state level and should be thought of as next steps to build on changes established by New Jersey's TEACHNJ Act and related state policy changes.

### Strengthen and support talent

**1** *Repeal the residency requirement.* Right now New Jersey requires its public school teachers and school and district staff to live in the state. This places an unnecessary burden on school personnel and it prohibits urban leaders with high concentrations of failing schools from recruiting teachers from nearby metropolises like New York City and Philadelphia. Repealing the residency requirement will give schools a broader pool of candidates from which to recruit; this is especially important for hard-to-staff positions. Repealing the residen-

cy requirement would have widespread benefits for both district and charter schools.

**2** *Increase the rigor of traditional teacher preparation programs and support teachers throughout their careers.* New Jersey teachers deserve top-of-the-line training so they can begin their careers prepared to succeed with our kids. However, there is work to be done to ensure such training is available; recently New Jersey received a C- from the National Council on Teacher Quality in their review of teacher preparation programs in the state.<sup>29</sup>

First, teacher preparation programs should require candidates to boast strong academic records. New Jersey has already made steps toward improving teacher quality by proposing raising the minimum GPA requirement for novice teachers.<sup>30</sup> This is an important first step, but we must strive for higher standards before teaching candidates graduate from college.

Getting top-of-the-line training also means having the information one needs to choose the best education school. The New Jersey State Board of Education revealed recently that the state is developing an Educator Preparation Provider Annual Report. Data from the report will include information on teaching candidates' academic qualifications, gender, race, ethnicity, scores on licensure assessments, and evidence of effectiveness in the classroom.<sup>31</sup> We encourage the state to release this aggregated data publicly so aspiring teachers can make informed decisions about which program to attend, and so principals and superintendents can see which applicants for open teaching positions have received the best training.

When it comes to the preparation itself, we must provide our candidates with a rigorous course of study that emphasizes clinical experience. Improvements to traditional teacher preparation programs would strengthen the talent pool for *all* schools across the state, including both traditional public schools and charter schools.

It is worth noting that improvements to teacher preparation programs will have a limited impact unless we can also provide teachers with ongoing high-quality professional development. Teachers must have opportunities to work with their colleagues, in their schools and across the state, to drive improvements to their own instruction. Technology should also be used to provide resources for teachers, such as documented best practices, videos of exemplar lessons, and assistance with instruction.

**3** *End seniority-based layoffs.* New Jersey is one of only 10 states that still weigh years in the classroom above all other considerations when making layoff decisions.<sup>32</sup> Students and teachers would be better served if New Jersey modeled its reduction-in-force statutes after states where classroom performance and student outcomes are the most important factors. Colorado, Florida and Indiana, among others, provide strong examples. We applaud the improvements to New Jersey’s tenure policy through TEACHNJ. For the first time in our public schools’ history, teachers will earn, and keep, tenure based on how effective they are in the classroom. However, there are still far too many schools in New Jersey where district leaders, including superintendents and principals, lack the flexibility to make transformational changes that would match student needs with the highest-performing teachers.

**4** *Reward the best teachers.* New Jersey should also look at innovative approaches to reward our most effective teachers. Currently, New Jersey’s teachers are compensated based on pay scales that differ by district and tend to reward years in the classroom and advanced degrees. Yet, research confirms that years of experience and additional credentials don’t always amount to better instruction.<sup>33</sup>

#### *Differentiated compensation*

New Jersey should move away from “step and lane” models for compensating teachers. Models to consider include those used in Florida, Indiana and District of Columbia Public Schools, which directly tie teacher compensation to teacher evaluation results.<sup>34</sup> For example DCPS’s model uses two methods for rewarding highly effective teachers. Teachers are eligible for an annual bonus based on student growth, and teachers with highly effective ratings qualify for an increase in salary base.<sup>35</sup> New Jersey should further study these models and use our own teacher evaluation system to identify and reward the most effective teachers.

#### *Career ladders*

Another approach to consider is a teacher career ladder that establishes multiple levels of teaching duties and differentiates pay as teachers take on more responsibility. This will serve to develop top teaching talent, increase the impact of highly effective teachers and help develop a pipeline for teachers interested in becoming school leaders. Arizona’s Career Ladder Program operates in 28 districts across the state and 40 percent of teachers in the state are employed in Career Ladder dis-

tricts.<sup>36</sup> Participating school districts cited improvements in student achievement, and teacher surveys revealed that there were overall improvements to the schools' instructional programs.<sup>37</sup>

## Enhance school choice

**5** **Overhaul the charter school law.** Kids and their families want high-quality school choices. In Newark alone, there are more than 10,000 students on charter school waiting lists. Statewide, nearly 20,000 students are waiting for open seats.<sup>38</sup>

Charter schools are certainly not the only way to offer parents and families more high-quality choices, but they are a critical part of the solution. When charters were first created at the national level and here in New Jersey, the primary objective was for charters to serve as laboratories of innovation. The idea was to use the flexibility afforded to charter schools to demonstrate the power of great leaders and teachers who could create the culture and environment to help at-risk students succeed, unencumbered by the restrictive rules of district school systems. Using this autonomy and innovation, the idea was to prove what's possible in terms of student achievement, even for students facing many challenges. While not all charters have met these lofty goals, in New Jersey, particularly in Newark, we have seen some evidence of success. In Newark charter schools, students gained 7.5 additional months in reading and nine months in math.<sup>39</sup> At this point, our next challenge is take these lessons learned and look aggressively at how districts and charters can collaborate to build on this success for all students.

To fully execute on the original goal for charters and expand the number of high-quality school options, we must reform New Jersey's charter school law when it comes to charter school authorizing, facilities funding, general operating funding and regulatory requirements. The right changes to these laws will help our high-performing schools thrive and will help New Jersey attract even more outstanding charter school operators—both both independent charters and charter management organizations—to meet the growing demand for charter schools. With an improved charter school law, kids will have access to better educational options. Additionally, traditional district schools and charter schools can collaborate and share best practices to drive overall improvements to student outcomes.

### *Authorizing*

New Jersey needs a second charter school authorizer. Right now, only the New Jersey Department of Education may award a charter, which means the pace and nature of authorizing decisions depend on both the capacity of the department and the education agenda of the administration in power.

We recommend instituting an independent charter school board, which the National Association of Charter School Authorizers identifies as the ideal alternative statewide authorizer.<sup>40</sup> An independent charter board can authorize charter schools in any community. We envision an independent charter board comprised of members selected by the governor and legislative leadership, with the commissioner of education serving as a member of the board. This will bring diverse viewpoints into every step of the charter school application and accountability processes.

### *Autonomy*

Typically charter schools receive greater autonomy than traditional district schools in exchange for being held to stricter measures of accountability. We applaud the recent changes made to improve charter accountability, notably the creation of the charter performance contract and the closure of low-performing charters. We support continued efforts along these lines. However, charters need more autonomy to best serve their students. This may come in the form of policies that provide the state or new authorizers with the ability to waive some certification requirements for charter school staff and/or exempt charter schools from other laws that govern traditional school districts. Granting charter schools in New Jersey the same autonomy they receive in other places, like Arizona, the District of Columbia, Louisiana and Oklahoma, will provide them the flexibility they need to create their own school cultures and curricula to best meet their students' needs. As further measures are explored to give greater autonomy to charter schools, policymakers should consider whether there are areas where traditional public schools would be better served with more autonomy as well.

### *Funding*

Funding is an issue for New Jersey's charter schools. High-quality charter schools can't expand and reach more of the children who need them most without equitable funding. The New Jersey Charter Schools Association reported that charters were receiving, on average, \$12,908 per pupil, and traditional public schools would have received \$19,782 per pupil for those same students—35 percent more.<sup>41</sup> One issue is that under current law, charter schools do not receive state adjustment aid,

even though their home districts do. As a result, charter schools in districts with substantial adjustment aid are expected to provide the same level of service that their traditional school neighbors provide, without having the financial resources to do so.<sup>42</sup>

### ***Better access to facilities***

The high cost of facilities is often a major impediment to charter school growth and often diverts money away from instruction, where it is most critically needed. We must ensure that charter schools have at least one of the following three options at their disposal: 1) right of first refusal for under-used district buildings at no or nominal rents, 2) receive additional per-pupil funding for facilities, or 3) have access to a state grant or loan program for facilities.

Exploring more creative financing options for facilities is yet another area where there may be lessons to learn for districts as well. As we consider a loan program and continue to look at other novel financing options, like the use of federal bond programs for charter facilities, we ought to examine if there is any flexibility to extend these options to district schools as well.

## **Set higher expectations with accountability**

**6** ***Set higher standards to raise the bar.*** We must focus intently on holding schools, school personnel, state policymakers and families accountable for students' outcomes to ensure that all kids are fully prepared for college and their careers. That means, among other approaches, that we must provide parents and community members with user-friendly information about school performance so they can make the best decisions for themselves and their kids.

Although the movement to uphold the highest possible standards begins at the local level, we must also hold state and school leaders accountable for implementing the Common Core State Standards and the aligned Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career assessments. By comparing performance across all schools in the state and across the nation, we can identify which schools are in the greatest need of support and which ones are models of success.

Raising the bar through the implementation of the CCSS is critical not only for improving overall student outcomes, but also for ensuring that our students will be competitive in a global economy. The CCSS will bring New Jersey standards more in line with the standards used in the international community.<sup>43</sup> In the process we must ensure that parents understand changes to our school standards so they can play a part in promoting accountability.

## Measuring success

How do we measure the success of bringing this vision to life? The ultimate metric is whether students are performing better in school: whether we're increasing overall student performance, closing achievement gaps, improving college and career readiness and bolstering our international competitiveness. We will track data in these three areas at the state level and take a deeper look at target districts with the greatest student performance challenges.

Still, it will take years for any policy change to translate into dramatic, measurable shifts in outcomes. That's why New Jersey must set incremental indicators to assess progress and reevaluate plans as needed. For example, as noted in the following table for our recommendation for overhauling the charter law, we would expect to see growth in the number of high-quality charter seats. For our recommendations on supporting and strengthening talent we would anticipate seeing improvements in overall teacher quality measured by the current teacher evaluation system. To some extent our ability to track these indicators will be based on the extent to which the state will be able to make this data publicly available and the extent to which partner organizations, including key researchers like the National Council on Teacher Quality, revisit some of their rankings and research on teacher preparation programs and similar inputs.

Moving forward we plan to measure our success based on our ability to codify the recommendations outlined in this document and how well the policies contribute to the desired results: better student outcomes.

# Policy recommendation

# Interim indicators to measure impact

## Strengthen and support talent

**1 Increase the rigor of traditional teacher preparation programs and support teachers throughout their careers.**

Highly effective teacher prep programs will be easily identifiable to potential students and school leaders looking to hire new teachers.

We will monitor the National Council on Teacher Quality's data to look at improvements to our teacher preparation programs.

Driven by demand and information, the number of highly effective teacher preparation programs will rise, thus increasing the number of graduates from these programs.

**2 Repeal the residency requirement.**

Schools will be able to hire educators and staff from a wider pool of applicants, to better meet their needs, with the highest quality talent.

Teachers who want to work in New Jersey schools will have the flexibility to live outside of the state.

**3 End seniority-based layoffs.**

Districts that need to downsize will be able to do so using performance as a primary factor. As a result, we expect to see a reduction in the number of teachers without placements. For example, in Newark, we would expect to see a reduction in educators without placement sites.<sup>44</sup>

**4 Reward the best teachers.**

There will be improvement in student outcomes in places where career ladders and differentiated pay are implemented.

There will be a decline over time in the turnover rates of highly effective teachers in districts where this policy is implemented.

## Enhance school choice

**5 Overhaul the charter school law.**

New high-quality charter management organizations and high-quality independent schools will be attracted to open and expand in New Jersey.

As a result of increased accountability measures the number of high-quality charter schools will increase and underperforming charter schools will be closed. Over time, there will be an increase in the number of high-quality charter seats.

Charter schools will be able to devote more of their funding towards instruction rather than facilities.

## Set higher expectations with accountability

**6 Set higher standards to raise the bar.**

The Common Core State Standards and related assessments will be implemented on schedule. Because raising performance takes time, we will assess trends over the course of five years to measure overall impact.

All schools and students will be held to the same high standards.

## Conclusion

This brief list touches upon JerseyCAN's most immediate policy recommendations, the proposed changes that we'll pursue in 2014 and 2015 to set our state on the path to educational excellence. But that's just the beginning. Our state, like our country, deserves substantial long-term improvements that will continue to benefit children for the foreseeable future. In the *Framework* itself, JerseyCAN outlines a more comprehensive set of reform goals to achieve that long-term success, and includes research that supports our case. As new policy recommendations arise that support our goals, we will work to support such additional recommendations as well.

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# About JerseyCAN

JerseyCAN: The New Jersey Campaign for Achievement launched in the spring of 2013 as an education research and advocacy organization that brings together education leaders from across the state and arms them with top-notch education research and policy analysis to enact smart education policy. We believe every New Jersey child should have access to a great public school, because great schools change everything. We are a branch of 50CAN: The 50-State Campaign for Achievement Now, a growing national network of state-based education reform advocacy groups with campaigns in Maryland, Minnesota, North Carolina, New York, Pennsylvania and Rhode Island based on the groundbreaking model developed by ConnCAN in Connecticut.

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