Declaration of Education: Keeping Our Promise to the District’s Children
The District of Columbia Public Schools welcome all the children of this city. We want to be their first choice for elementary and secondary education. With support from the community, we help prepare each student to be a good neighbor and a responsible, productive member of a global society. In so doing, the district’s schools uphold the democratic values and the promise of American public education at its best.

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A Message from the Superintendent

Plans for improving DC Public Schools have been numerous. At their best, they were important steps to keep our youth in schools and ready for success when they graduate. At their worst, they sat on a shelf without the will to move them forward.

It is clear to all who care about the students in DC Public Schools that past plans and the leadership to move them forward — both in schools and in the community — have not been enough.

This plan represents a new day. Since November of last year, hundreds of volunteers, parents and other residents, youth, business leaders, teachers, principals, public officials, university leaders, and many others have been meeting to develop recommendations, all focused on one goal: improving student achievement.

This collaboration, known as the DC Education Compact, invited all participants to sign an agreement to put aside “personal, parochial, and political interests” to “ensure that our schools provide excellent student learning and achievement for all children in the District of Columbia.” It is this work that lays a new, stronger foundation for efforts to improve outcomes for students. Our work together established the basis for this plan and, as important, the commitment to move it forward.

This commitment and volunteerism are significant, but not enough. We need more parents to join efforts at their children’s schools, more businesses and community organizations to support after-school and other out-of-school times, and more citizens to become involved in our public schools.

Through my first eight months as superintendent, I have been strongly supported by Chairman Peggy Cooper Cafritz and other members of the school board. My partnership with Mayor Anthony Williams, Council Chair Linda Cropp, Education Committee chair Kathy Patterson and other members of city council has been one of mutual support. Several of the initiatives in this plan will require an even stronger partnership with the government of the District of Columbia. I am confident we will step up to the plate together.

While this plan has been developed, we have not stood still. We have new, strong academic standards; a performance-based budget that directly aligns spending with school programs and spells out staff accountability; a transitional plan to rebuild and repair our schools; and multiple improvements in support systems, from payroll to special education referrals. This work gives us a running start on implementing this plan.

There are three mutually supportive goals that frame this Declaration of Education. The first, as it should be, focuses on academics. To put it bluntly, children need, and deserve, a better classroom experience: good teachers, interesting curriculum, textbooks that arrive on time and a culture of respect that sets high expectations for each and every student. We need a framework for our schools that establishes clear paths toward college and satisfying careers.

The second goal focuses on management systems. It is no secret that our basic functions — procurement, human resources, technology and other critical systems — are broken. In recent months, we have made many important steps not only to fix these systems but also to establish high-performing systems that are aligned to support student achievement.
The third goal focuses on how we communicate with and engage our teachers, principals and staff; parents, families and community members; and our many partners. Improving our communication and mechanisms for participation is central to the success of this plan. In putting forth this goal, it is important for us to acknowledge that we have not always been transparent or easy to work with. That, too, is changing.

The following pages offer more detail on each of these goals. Our next step is to build an implementation plan in partnership with our educators, the DC Education Compact and many new partners. Please join us as we work to deliver on the promise of American public education in our nation’s capital.

Sincerely,

Clifford B. Janey, Ed.D.
Superintendent and Chief State School Officer
May 2, 2005
VALUES

Let us unite, staff and community, around three central propositions:

- Each and every student will learn.
- As adults — staff and community — we are mutually accountable for providing students with quality opportunities to learn ... and for modeling responsible behavior.
- Actions matter most, as a testament to effective implementation and steady progress toward our goals.

Learning encompasses more than academics. We want our students to be socially and emotionally prepared as well.

True accountability includes all employees and a broader group of stakeholders. The performance results of every DCPS employee; every public official making decisions regarding the public schools; and every parent, business and community stakeholder must be measured against student achievement results for every child in every grade level at every school. Both the expectations and the outcomes for student achievement must be made public.

In return, the community must invest the resources needed to achieve the planned outcomes. As a city, we will make a commitment to all our children in every public school that we will accept nothing less than the best educational practices and system performance so that every child has an equal opportunity to learn.

We need to set the goals high and be realistic about how quickly we can achieve them for all students. We’re running a marathon; the community should expect steady, demonstrable progress, but not miracles.

We must be transparent, open and honest about the work — celebrating successes, but also owning up to shortcomings.

Let us be welcoming and collaborative; multiple people (both inside and outside DCPS) need opportunities to help shape and, hence, own this work.

And let us be both demanding — of staff, students and the community — and supportive, especially of the students who are entrusted to our care.

MAKING PROGRESS

“We must follow the Noah Principle. No more prizes for predicting rain. Prizes only for building arks.” — Lou Gerstner, former CEO

The shortfalls of DCPS are well known and have been amply documented. We will not hide from the hard truth of the system’s long-standing failure to deliver on its promise to provide a high-quality education to all children. Indeed, this report discusses many of the most troublesome shortcomings; we need to be collectively clear about where we stand so that we can be just as clear about where we need to go and how we plan to get there.

That said, we will be equally vigilant about celebrating gains. Without hope, we’re stuck, trapped in a cycle of despair that too often seems to have paralyzed this system in the past. Throughout this plan, we report on some of the major accomplishments of the past several months.

We have a very long way to go, but we trust that even our harshest critics will acknowledge that in many areas we are on the right track.
Our Singular Focus: Improved Student Learning

As the saying goes, the main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing. For DCPS, the main thing is improved student learning. All of our actions — every day in every classroom, every school, every central office — will be driven by this top priority.

Ultimately, our success will be determined by how well students achieve academically, starting in the core subjects of English language arts and mathematics, so that they graduate prepared for college, work, the military or any other postsecondary opportunities. Instead of testing all students every year, as DCPS has done recently, starting in 2004–05 we will test students in grades 3, 5, 8 and 10. Beginning in spring 2006, we will test students annually in grades 3 through 8 and grade 10, as required by the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law. In 2007, we also will begin testing students in these grades annually in science, also as required by NCLB. Other subjects also are important; they will not be neglected. But we need to make priorities, and the public, policymakers and educators are clear: Excellence in English, math, social studies and science is the logical foundation for academic achievement in all other areas.

Unlike in the past, the new standardized tests will be aligned directly to the DCPS learning standards in these subject areas; that way, we will be directly measuring what we say our students need to know to succeed.

Ensuring that all students are fully prepared for life after high school means that we simultaneously must close achievement gaps between groups of students; typically, African American, Hispanic and low-income students have lagged behind. Our instructional and support programs will be designed to help low-performing students catch up.

DCPS has four critical benchmarks — three for achievement, the other for graduation, attendance, truancy and dropout rates — where the goals either meet or exceed the expectations of the state. Consistent with NCLB, the first set uses the state assessment and the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) targets. As required under NCLB, the same benchmarks have been set for all groups of students (white, African American, Hispanic, Asian, low-income, those with disabilities and those with limited English proficiency), and the goal for the 2013–14 school year is 100 percent proficiency.

### DCPS Assessment Goals — Percentage of Students Scoring Proficient or Above

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<td>57</td>
<td>59</td>
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<td>Secondary — English Language Arts</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Secondary — Mathematics</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>60</td>
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The second set of achievement goals uses the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results. The 2003 Trial Urban Development Assessment included results for 10 urban districts. We have benchmarked our future NAEP performance against the highest-performing district for both reading and mathematics — New York City. NAEP tests are given only once every two years.
The third set of achievement benchmarks uses Advanced Placement (AP) exam scores, the number of AP exams taken and AP course taking as the goals.

**National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) — Percentage of Students Scoring Basic or Above**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% At or Above Proficient</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td>% At or Above Basic</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>42</td>
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<tr>
<td>% At or Above Proficient</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>% At or Above Basic</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>54</td>
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The third set of achievement benchmarks uses Advanced Placement (AP) exam scores, the number of AP exams taken and AP course taking as the goals.

**Advanced Placement (AP) Courses and Exams**

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<tr>
<td>Students Enrolled in AP Courses</td>
<td>2,284</td>
<td>2,356</td>
<td>2,428</td>
<td>2,500</td>
<td>2,572</td>
<td>3,000</td>
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<td>Average AP Exam Scores</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>3.0</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>98</td>
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<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>411</td>
<td>452</td>
<td>493</td>
<td>534</td>
<td>575</td>
<td>822</td>
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<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>228</td>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>316</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>818</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>982</td>
<td>1,064</td>
<td>1,146</td>
<td>1,636</td>
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Also consistent with NCLB, DCPS has developed annual goals in four additional areas: graduation, attendance, truancy and dropouts. These benchmarks were established based on comparative data from states, districts and schools.

**Graduation, Attendance, Truancy and Dropouts — Percentage of Students**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graduation Rate</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance Rate</td>
<td>91.9</td>
<td>92.6</td>
<td>93.3</td>
<td>94.0</td>
<td>94.7</td>
<td>99.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Truancy Rate</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dropout Rate</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
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</table>

*Graduation rate measures the percentage of 9th-grade students who graduate four years later. Attendance rate measures average daily attendance. Truancy rate measures the percentage of students with at least 15 unexcused absences. Dropout rate measures the percentage of students who drop out each year.*
If parents and families do not help prepare their children to learn and if DCPS does not ensure effective teaching and learning in every classroom, in every school, in every part of the community, we are not doing our job. What happens in the classroom determines whether the district’s students graduate truly prepared for the challenges of the 21st century. Will they have the knowledge, skills and work habits to compete for good jobs — not just with other Americans but with students from other nations that have made world-class education a national priority? And will they have the character and confidence to raise their families, be good neighbors and succeed in an increasingly diverse global society?

Described below are a series of major improvements and innovations that not only will reach into every classroom but also will lead toward a new system of schools to truly prepare our children for the new century.

**Key Initiatives**

**Strong Standards and Curriculum**
The cornerstone is a new system of more challenging standards, tests and curriculum, starting with English language arts and mathematics this year, science and social studies next year, and four electives the following year. A stronger career and technical education program will ensure DCPS graduates can take advantage of fast-growing job opportunities in the area. We will continue to strengthen our special education program by reducing our reliance on expensive outplacements and creating new opportunities for students with disabilities to learn in neighborhood schools. All elementary, middle and junior high schools will have art and music again.

**A System of Effective Schools**
Schools will be provided with different levels of rewards, assistance and interventions, depending on their performance. Schools performing well will have greater autonomy, while the lowest-performing schools may be operated by education management organizations such as the KIPP Academy. High schools will be restructured to provide more engaging pathways (such as International Baccalaureate, arts and music, and upgraded career and technical education options) to help students graduate well-prepared for college, work, or military or community service. Students will be able to earn a diploma in three years if they’re ready, or they can take up to five years if they need the extra time.

**Welcoming and Safe Schools**
All elementary, middle and junior high schools will have art and music again. New discipline policies will reduce suspensions and referrals while strengthening violence prevention, peer mediation and conflict resolution programs in all schools.
High-Quality Teachers and Principals
A new Leadership Academy for Principals, expanded professional development for teachers, mentoring programs for new teachers, and tighter certification and recertification policies will help ensure quality instruction in all classrooms. In the next five years, 500 teachers will earn National Board certification. A future goal is for at least 50 principals to have a similar opportunity to be nationally certified.

Partnership for Success
Partnerships with the DC Education Compact, the DC government, local businesses, community-based organizations and others will address multiple priorities, including reading and math support, early childhood education, school-based health services, after-school and summer-school programs, and the transition to high school. Students will graduate from DCPS at higher rates, and they will be better prepared for college, postsecondary training or good jobs.

Making Progress
We have made great strides in the past several months to establish a strong foundation for teaching and learning. Most important, we have worked closely with educators and parents to develop grade-level standards in the two core subjects – English language arts and mathematics. These new learning expectations, based on the best standards in the country, have been customized for our schools and will now serve as the basis for aligned curriculum, instructional frameworks, assessments textbooks and professional development. Development of these central academic components is well under way, as is work on the new science and social studies standards. We scaled back this spring’s testing system to a more sensible mix of grades. We have significantly expanded our capacity to service special education students in neighborhood schools (see Special Education, page 17). We have planned a more enriching summer school program for struggling and star students alike. Elementary schools have new classroom libraries. And we have worked closely with external partners to design an automotive certification program that we believe will serve as a model for other such career and technical options.
GOAL 1: PROVIDE HIGH-QUALITY TEACHING AND LEARNING IN EVERY CLASSROOM IN EVERY SCHOOL

Student achievement is our primary focus. To help students achieve, principals and teachers need high-quality standards as the basis for quality instruction. Students and parents need to know what the standards for classroom excellence are — and be assured that they will be applied consistently in every classroom in every school. The curriculum; textbooks; and other instructional tools, tests and training must be connected to the learning standards. To the extent possible, students need choices in the kinds of schools they attend and the courses they take; although we expect all students to meet the same standards, we must create multiple pathways for them to arrive at this destination. Teachers and students need classrooms that are functional, friendly and safe. And they need to know they can count on the support of the whole community: quality preschool, mentoring support for young readers, quality health care services, after-school learning opportunities and internships for older students that are relevant and motivating.

All schools must be responsible for teaching the same curriculum; without consistency and coherence, standards alone are meaningless, and we will perpetuate the fragmented, ad hoc approach that the Council of Great City Schools cited in its 2004 report. But we also need to create multiple pathways that meet the needs of each student. Schools where majorities of students are meeting or exceeding the standards should have additional flexibility; let's not let the charter schools have a monopoly on innovation. And students who have met the standards should have an opportunity to accelerate their learning.

We will employ three overarching systemic strategies to improve teaching and learning. First, we will strengthen the capacity of the central office to provide direction and support schools with quality technical assistance. Second, for some higher-performing schools, we will provide resources, give them more autonomy and hold them accountable for results. Third, DCPS will contract with third parties — such as nonprofit and for-profit organizations, universities, and proven public charter schools — to provide technical assistance to some low-performing schools.

Strategy 1: Develop strong and aligned academic standards, curriculum, instruction and assessment supported by effective data systems.

By September 2005:

Develop and apply clear and rigorous standards. Clear and rigorous standards, measures of student performance, are the foundation for improved student achievement throughout the school system. DCPS has selected highly regarded benchmarks in two core academic areas: English language arts (pre-K–12) and mathematics (pre-K–12). These provide the starting points for aligned curriculum, instruction, tests, textbooks, and other instructional materials and programs.
**Implement the new standards.** High-quality curriculum frameworks will provide teachers with more specific guidance on how to use the learning standards in their daily classroom instruction. Among other priorities, students will have new textbooks, aligned to the standards, in English language arts, mathematics and science, while teachers will receive classroom-specific professional development in how to teach to the standards (see Strategy 3, page 13).

**Develop and administer new standards-based tests.** Rigorous, standardized assessments in English language arts and mathematics will be fully aligned with our standards and comply with the requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind law. The new assessments will be field tested during spring 2005 and administered for the first time in spring 2006.

*From September 2005 through August 2006:*

**Bring back art and music to all elementary, middle and junior high schools.** Currently, 44 schools do not have art teachers and 49 are without music instructors. This new investment will provide teachers, equipment and supplies in those schools so that art, music and other arts become part of the core curriculum in all of our schools. These courses often help engage students in other subjects.

**Implement standards in two more subjects.** Clear and rigorous standards, based on national exemplars, will be applied in two additional subjects: science and social studies. Implementation again will include selecting new textbooks, aligning instructional frameworks and providing training programs to help teachers learn how to incorporate the new standards into their daily instruction.

**Provide more supports for teachers.** While each teacher will be provided with initial supports and training to implement the new curriculum, there will be a great deal of learning in the first year of applying the new standards. Analysis of the lessons learned will lead to the development of improved tools and supports for teachers. Likely, initial supports will include a variety of formative classroom assessments that can be used by teachers throughout the year to measure student progress and then adjust their instruction to better meet individual student needs, as well as instructional supports that help teachers develop lesson plans, group students, and select appropriate instructional materials and other classroom assistance.

**Showcase excellence.** Examples of student academic work, with teacher comments, demonstrate that standards have been met or exceeded. These models will help clarify for teachers, students and parents what “good work” looks like.

**Strengthen special education programs.** We will systematically build on this year’s gains to create a more cost-effective program that provides improved instruction for students (see Special Education, page 17).

*From September 2006 through August 2007:*

**Develop and apply standards in four more subjects.** Clear and rigorous standards, based on exemplary national standards, will be introduced in the four electives: art, music, physical education/health and world languages.
Explore a longer school year. Working with teachers and administrators, we will assess the feasibility and impact of a longer school year for students, from 182 instructional days to 192. Major gains in student achievement will require more instructional time.

Utilize new instructional data systems. As our information technology systems are able to provide regular, quality data on schools and students, we will ensure that teachers and principals have universal, reliable and timely access to student achievement data. Educators need this information to adjust their instruction and school-improvement efforts to address individual and classroom needs early, before it is too late.

Going Forward:

Focus on 100% success by 2014. For our system to meet federal standards by 2014, we will need to make significant and continuous improvement year after year. To accomplish this goal, we will continue to strengthen our curriculum and instructional frameworks for teachers and principals, learn from increasing use of instructional data, and provide continued support for our teachers.

Strategy 2: Create a system of effective schools with multiple paths toward completion and success.

By September 2005:

Provide more effective help to low-performing schools. Our new program will replace the Transformation Model and reach more schools with additional support and resources (see Targeted Interventions, page 11). This approach, based on a successful model being used in Massachusetts, aligns more closely with federal standards in No Child Left Behind and increases the number of categories of recognition and intervention. Instead of trying to raise student achievement by buying a new program, textbook or computer program, this model provides principals and teachers with tools to make more systemic changes. Understanding standards, tests and curriculum and being able to use data are critical skills in improving schools. Schools that need help will be served by on-site solutions teams: distinguished educators, who will coach principals; teacher specialists, who will coach teachers in each content area; and curriculum specialists, who will work with all school staff. Where necessary, we will contract with outside educational management organizations, such as the KIPP Academy, to help turn around our lowest-performing schools.

From September 2005 through August 2006:

Begin high school restructuring. Numerous researchers and foundations have been examining whether some of the long-accepted fundamental frameworks for high school are outdated and outmoded. Although the choice to drop out of high school is driven by many factors, it also is clear that many students vote with their feet when it comes to high school. DCPS is embarking on a major effort to determine how to strengthen the high school experience in ways that will ensure academic rigor and reconnect disconnected youth with schooling. There are a number of research-based models to guide specific changes in curriculum, graduation standards and specific kinds of coursework. DCPS will start this effort with four initiatives:
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<th>Level of School Performance</th>
<th>District Response, Based on NCLB Criteria</th>
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| **High-Performing**
Schools making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), which means that students in all subgroups meet the learning goals. See pages 4–5 for the annual goals. | Will be provided incentive rewards and/or recognitions, as well as additional autonomy. Currently, 59 schools are in this category, mostly elementary schools.
Twenty-two of these schools are eligible for an incentive award, meaning that 70 percent of their students have met AYP goals and the school has high academic standards, uses research-driven instructional methods and data, and offers high-quality professional development and technology support. |
| **Targeted Assistance**
Schools failing to meet AYP targets for the first time. | Will receive additional support from central office. Currently, 23 schools are in this category, although this number could change because NCLB targets will be raised every two years until 2014, when all schools must achieve 100 percent proficiency in reading and mathematics.
Consistent with the Performance Improvement Mapping (PIM) model used in Massachusetts, leadership support teams will review the school’s curriculum, instruction, assessment, programs and services and prescribe intervention strategies specific to the needs of the school. In addition, schools will be required to report on their progress. School leadership teams will learn how to strengthen their curriculum as the primary tool for addressing individual students’ academic needs. |
| **In Need of Improvement**
Schools failing to meet AYP targets for two consecutive years. | Will receive substantial, effective, school-based interventions. Currently, 51 elementary, middle, junior high and high schools are in this category.
Schools will receive intensive training in the PIM process from on-site coaches and external audit teams. Teachers in these schools will receive job-embedded training that emphasizes the use of data to analyze students’ academic needs and prescribe specific, curriculum-based strategies for each child. These strategies will be based on detailed curriculum guides aligned to the new DC standards and tests. |
| **Corrective Action**
Schools failing to meet AYP targets for three consecutive years. | Will be subject to any of the following: decreased management authority, appointment of an outside adviser, longer school days or school year, restructuring and/or the replacement of relevant staff. Currently, 14 schools are in this category.
Schools in corrective action will receive all the resources and training available to schools “in need of improvement,” but they may receive additional coaches and training based on the recommendations of an external support team.
Changes in staffing and leadership will be considered if the team concludes that the school leadership is unable to implement the PIM process. |
| **Restructuring**
Schools failing to meet AYP targets for four or more consecutive years. | Will be subject to any of the following: replacement of relevant staff, outsourcing of operations and leadership to successful educational management organizations such as the KIPP Academy, state management, and/or other alternative governance structures. Schools in this category were previously classified as “transformation schools.”
These schools will receive all the resources and training available to schools in “corrective action,” but they may receive additional coaches and training based on the recommendations of an external support team. Changes in staffing and leadership will be considered if the team concludes that the school leadership is unable to implement the PIM process. |
Raise graduation requirements. One focal point will be raising high school graduation course and credit requirements from 23.5 credit hours to 27.5. This will ensure that more students are taking meaningful courses throughout high school and are better positioned for postsecondary opportunities.

Expand and strengthen Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) programs. Programs such as these provide the challenging courses that our students need to be truly prepared for college or good jobs. To help increase our pass rate on AP exams, we will offer at least two AP courses at every high school, as well as provide additional classroom support for students and teachers. We will expand the IB programs to a middle and senior high school in Southeast DC, then strengthen the middle school program to support the current IB program at Banneker High School.

Strengthen career and technical education programs. In today's economy, there are new kinds of good jobs. Our curriculum and partnerships with employers need to be adapted to the new economy and the fastest-growing jobs in the school district. Professions in the hospitality industry and forensic science can complement upgraded programs in auto mechanics, building trades, electronics, plumbing, architecture, engineering and construction. In some cases, this will not only mean changes in high schools but also new partnerships for additional postsecondary training and certification. A top Year 1 priority will be to secure partnerships with labor unions and trade associations to enable our students to become apprentices and receive specialized training to enhance their opportunities for good jobs in the construction and service sectors, now and in the future.

Create instructional “threads” from pre-K to high schools. Initial planning will be conducted to create thematic instructional “threads” that extend from pre-K through high school. These will provide more engaging instructional alternatives to better meet the needs of individual students. We envision a continuum of schools that offer world languages; other clusters of schools that specialize in arts, technology, or math and science; inclusion schools for special education students; and others that focus on dual language and multiculturalism.

Plan changes to alternative education programs. We will identify new models that more effectively meet the special needs of each and every student. In addition to different learning styles and interests, many students struggle with the demands of family and community. Alternative programs will enable students to pursue special interests through options that may include flexible school hours, smaller classrooms and programs that provide structured behavior interventions.

From September 2006 through August 2007:

Establish a consistent grade-level organization for all schools in the district (pre-K and elementary, middle, junior high and high schools). Consistent school organizations will ensure program continuity, the alignment of instructional approaches and coordinated teacher professional development. In addition, the central office will be able to organize more targeted and unified support to schools.
Implement school restructuring initiatives. Work in the prior year will have defined a number of initiatives for school improvement and school redesign (see Targeted Interventions, page 11). DCPS will continue a phased implementation of these interventions, ranging from technical assistance to school takeovers by educational management organizations with successful track records of improving student performance, beginning with the Kipp Academy in fall 2005.

Better link graduates to jobs. Provide Certificates of Employability to high school graduates, guaranteeing that they are ready for entry-level jobs. These certificates will be jointly crafted by employers, school systems and training programs. This will be part of our broader effort to develop a high-quality career and technical education program.

Introduce new instructional “threads.” We will work with schools to begin introducing these new instructional pathways in subjects such as technology, math and science, and world languages.

Create partnerships that lead to college degrees. Many school systems are establishing partnerships with community colleges and four-year colleges so students who choose particular programs have a straightforward path toward a bachelor’s degree. We will work with the Consortium of Colleges and Universities to develop a continuum of pre-K–20 educational opportunities that extend from the earliest years through graduate school.

Flexible time for graduation. Flexible programs for high school students would allow them to graduate in three, four or five years. Students who need more time to meet the learning standards should get it. Students who can accelerate their learning should have that opportunity. This kind of flexibility has helped increase graduation rates in cities such as Rochester, NY.

Going Forward:

Focus on achievement and flexibility. All efforts to educate and innovate must focus on ensuring schools perform and are part of a structure that provides multiple paths to student success — be it college, a career, military or community service, or other paths. Efforts in these years will focus on effectively executing plans while maintaining a clear focus on the overall goal.

Strategy 3: Create schools that are welcoming, safe, engaging and organized for student success.

By September 2005:

Ensure welcoming schools. Protocols and standards will be established to ensure that every classroom in every school has an acceptable environment for teaching and learning. Among other provisions, there will be certain non-negotiables for all schools, such as using the district’s new standards-based curriculum, offering music and art as part of the core, and having a librarian.
From September 2005 through August 2006:

**Stronger implementation of safe schools plans.** Each school will be required to develop measures to ensure student safety in and outside the school. These will include both emergency measures and preventative programs with measurable goals. *(Also a part of Goal 2, see page 18.)*

From September 2006 through August 2007:

**Develop new discipline policies.** School teams will conduct a detailed review of DCPS discipline policies and best practices in other school districts. This effort, which will include addressing in- and out-of-school suspensions and expulsions, will lead toward a model policy that will help improve student behavior and ensure that all students’ instructional needs are being met. *(Also a part of Goal 2, see page 18.)*

**Reduce suspension rates and disciplinary referrals.** One innovative approach will use behavioral management specialists to provide technical assistance to schools, helping to reduce high suspension rates and disciplinary referrals.

**Implement a comprehensive violence prevention program.** This may include a variety of research-based approaches, such as conflict resolution, peer mediation and violence prevention programs, such as Resolving Conflicts Creatively, a K–12 program focused on social and emotional learning.

**Going Forward:**

We will continue to implement programs that create safe and welcoming schools where learning flourishes and students, employees and parents feel true ownership of the schools.

**Strategy 4:** Ensure the recruitment and retention of high-quality instructional staff by providing systematic opportunities and supports for professional improvement.

By September 2005:

**Introduce Leadership Academy for Principals.** In collaboration with partners, DCPS will better prepare administrators to be effective instructional leaders in their schools. This high-quality learning institute will help us recruit effective principals into the school district as well as support and retain the excellent principals already here.

From September 2005 through August 2006:

**Raise standards for new teachers.** Reading, the foundational skill for all learning, needs to be well taught by all teachers. In addition, there will be rigorous certification for new teachers to ensure that they also have a 2.5 GPA in their student teaching courses and pass the Praxis I and Praxis II teacher exams.
Retain newer teachers. Many teachers leave teaching after the first several years; this is costly to students and the system. DCPS will provide additional mentoring and peer support to new teachers to increase retention and satisfaction.

*From September 2006 through August 2007:*

**Investigate a longer work year.** DCPS will initiate a study to explore the feasibility and impact of a longer work year for teachers — from 192 days to 200 days — which will allow extended time for in-depth training in instruction, classroom management and other core areas.

**Align professional development programs.** DCPS will establish a comprehensive, tiered approach to high-quality teacher development, aligned to districtwide learning standards and goals. Training models will offer a mix of theory and practice. Training will include a mix of centralized workshops, job-embedded strategies such as lesson studies, and classroom-based coaching. All training will meet the standards of the National Staff Development Council. In collaboration with community partners, DCPS also will explore establishing professional development institutes and schools, where district staff will work with our higher education partners to make teaching a profession in which continued learning is valued and all teachers have the content knowledge to teach their subjects well.

**Increase teacher professionalism.** Board-certified teachers boost student achievement and serve as role models for their peers. We will steadily boost the number of teachers who earn certification from the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards, with a goal of certifying up to 100 teachers annually for the next five years.

**Going Forward:**

**Implement national certification for principals.** We will continue to improve the knowledge and skills of our administrators by developing a National Principal certification program that will offer advanced training and professional recognition to 25 principals per year. We will partner with three national organizations to ensure high-quality standards.

**Implement stronger criteria for recertifying teachers.** As DCPS works with teachers to build their professional capacity, we will implement stronger criteria for recertifying teachers while building internal supports to ensure that our teachers can meet these higher expectations.

**Strategy 5: Provide multiple supports directly and with partners to ensure student success.**

*By September 2005:*

**Design intervention programs.** We will plan and design academic intervention programs to provide additional learning supports to students who are not meeting the learning standards.
Provide pre-college academic enrichment. Through a partnership with the College Board’s SpringBoard program and additional PSAT counseling, we will help middle school and high school students be better prepared for entering college.

Partner in the city’s Birth to Eight initiative. The DC government, through an initiative called City of Learning, is working to ensure that all students are ready to learn when they enter kindergarten and leave 3rd grade with a solid foundation of academic and social skills. DCPS will partner with the city on this initiative.

From September 2005 through August 2006:

Help students with reading and math. We need to be more proactive in identifying students who need extra support, diagnosing what they need and providing that help in timely and effective ways. This will be accomplished in part by supplementing the After Care for All program to provide reading and mathematics services for students, hiring additional numeracy and literacy coaches, and purchasing research-based intervention programs and activities.

Provide academic enrichment in out-of-school-time programs. The District of Columbia has a broad array of after-school and summer programs supported by DCPS, the DC government, and community-based organizations and foundations. DCPS will, in collaboration with partners, develop an effective and coordinated extracurricular strategy for after-school and summer-school programs that is aligned with academic standards. These safety-net programs will complement the classroom and in-school programs we are developing.

Implement a pre-K and kindergarten screening program. Early screening identifies health and human service issues that, if addressed early, can help lay the foundation for student success. DCPS will collaborate with the city and other community partners on this initiative.

Create a partnership that will provide student support systems in and out of school. Such systems would include mentoring, tutoring, recreation, and wraparound health and mental health services that help address the nonacademic needs of students and families.

From September 2006 through August 2007:

Improve transitions to high school for rising 9th- and 10th-grade students. Many students, especially males, never make it to high school. DCPS, in collaboration with community partners, will establish a Summer Bridges program where 9th- and 10th-grade students will become acquainted with their high school campus, gain learning and study skills to meet the challenging high school curriculum, and develop individualized academic progress plans.

Going Forward:

Build more comprehensive supports. As the nation’s capital, the District of Columbia is blessed with an extraordinary and diverse set of assets. Unfortunately, many students in our schools never have an opportunity to experience that richness. The previously described initiatives will help develop the infrastructure for engaging more local and national partners in helping support our students. These programs will be coordinated by our new Office of Parent and Community Partnerships (see Goal 3, page 28).
Special Education: A Special Challenge

Getting our special education costs under control while simultaneously providing an effective and efficient continuum of evidence-based programs to serve all special education students is a major priority.

Each year, 25 percent of our instructional budget goes to special education services — from instruction to transportation to legal services. We already are making progress on several fronts. We spend $7 million annually to pay private companies for testing, services and evaluations. Through a combination of recruitment efforts, we intend to decrease our reliance on private providers this year, for a net savings of $2 million.

Over the past two years, we have added approximately 1,200 seats to serve special education students in their own classrooms instead of sending them to expensive outplacements. While the number of students with disabilities enrolled in DCPS programs is increasing, the enrollment in nonpublic programs is stabilizing. For the school year 2005–06, we expect to add 715 seats for students with the most severe needs.

The newly rehabilitated Prospect Learning Center is a model for how we can adapt our existing assets in a cost-effective manner to meet changing educational needs and provide special education services in neighborhood schools. By working more effectively and proactively with students, teachers and families, we have reduced special education referrals from 234 per month to 200 per month.

Although progress has been made, continued improvement in the delivery of instruction is necessary. Research has proven that students with disabilities, when challenged, will demonstrate progress and achievement. Special education teachers must be trained with their general education peers and held to the same standards. General educators also must become skilled in differentiated instruction to serve all students.

To meet our goal of providing a continuum of model special education programs, we have identified the following priorities:

- Implement research-based instructional strategies to address the needs of special education students, and provide mentoring and coaching for staff serving students with disabilities.
- Train special and general education teachers in methods of “differentiated instruction,” including accommodations and modifications, to enhance learning for students with disabilities. This will increase the capacity of neighborhood schools to provide services to students closer to home.
- Create a continuum of pre-K–12 model schools that use best practices to ensure that students with disabilities are taught in the least-restrictive environment. Develop and implement the first models by the 2006–07 school year.
- Partner with universities and community organizations to offer nationally recognized programs that offer state-of-the-art structures and interventions to improve academic and behavioral outcomes. We will increase annually the number of model inclusion programs in schools.
- Increase by 20 percent annually the number of students who are assessed and receive appropriate special education services in a timely way. All students with disabilities will have current Individual Education Programs (IEP).
- Establish performance goals and indicators for students with disabilities that will be aligned with the new learning standards to improve student achievement and demonstrate annual gains.
- Use technical assistance teams to provide early intervention to students who demonstrate academic and social needs. This will reduce the annual number of unnecessary referrals to special education.
- Reduce by 25 percent annually the number of complaints and requests for due process related to special education services and placements.
- Establish annual achievement targets on standardized assessments for students with disabilities.
- Reduce the number of students in nonpublic placements by 5 percent annually. This will be accomplished by increasing the quality and appropriateness of services and programs within the District of Columbia Public Schools.
GOAL 2: ENSURE MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS SUPPORT HIGH-QUALITY TEACHING AND LEARNING IN EVERY CLASSROOM IN EVERY SCHOOL

Procurement, facilities, information technology. Those often have been code words for dysfunction and mismanagement in DCPS. We have turned the corner on many of these systems, with major improvements, new leadership and a focus on performance. Principals, teachers and staff need to know that the computers and phones will work; the right supplies will arrive on time; payroll checks will be processed; jobs will be posted and filled promptly; and resources will be allocated in fair, strategic and timely ways.

Staff and students need to know that the classrooms, bathrooms and grounds will be safe and clean ... and that teaching and learning will occur in buildings where the roofs do not leak, the heating and air conditioning work, and the windows are sealed. Administrators, policymakers and the community need access to understandable information that will allow effective learning and oversight of taxpayer dollars.

Key Actions and Initiatives

Procurement
DCPS is seeking to save $1.5 million in the next school year through the Phoenix Project, an aggressive effort to completely overhaul procurement services over the next several years; take advantage of our buying power; and allow procurement staff to focus on high-value purchases while we automate many routine transactions. This year, principals will be able to order supplies online through American Express, cutting delivery times from 30 days or more to three days. Allowing for the timely and hassle-free purchase of goods and services is essential for quality teaching and learning in the classroom.

Human Resources
Administrative systems are being upgraded so we can hire quality teachers and administrators before the school year. DCPS and the city are partnering to fully automate the personnel system and eliminate the payroll backlogs that have plagued the school district for years. Numerous professional development supports for teachers and principals are described under Goal 1.

Facilities
Major rehabilitation work will soon be under way at an additional 19 schools, and we will continue to reduce maintenance backlogs as part of our multiyear plan to ensure that all DCPS students have adequate learning environments. The forthcoming Master Education Plan will ensure that the city is making the best use of all of its school facilities. A new office will explore innovative public-private partnerships to create new educational opportunities and new facilities.
Safety and Health
A new model discipline policy is being crafted to help improve student behavior and ensure that all students’ instructional needs are being met. DCPS is partnering with the Metropolitan Police Department to assist with security issues in the schools and to help build our in-house capacity. We will explore similar partnerships with other community-based organizations. Our food service program has received federal certification for the first time in three years and soon will provide breakfast to all DC children. School security programs will align with student support programs such as peer mediation and conflict resolution.

Financial Management
We are revising the major budgeting formula that allocates funds to schools to reflect the refocused mission of DCPS and restore public confidence in the equity and transparency of the process. Our new performance-based budgeting system ties spending directly to academic and operations priorities.

Information Technology
The school district’s first comprehensive integrated information technology plan will be completed next year to address our huge technology gap and more fully automate our human resources, procurement and student information systems.

Making Progress
In recent months, we have taken major steps to reduce expenses and improve operations in several areas. We have accelerated the recruitment and hiring of critical-needs teachers in fields such as special education, English as a second language, math and science. Moreover, we have modified budget and recruitment processes to allow us to begin hiring teachers and administrators months earlier than usual — so that they are in place when school begins. Our performance-based budget clearly connects spending requests to academic and operational priorities and specifies very detailed performance goals for each office and department. Our budget projects savings of about $31 million in operational efficiencies, and we are on track to reach that target.

Our Transition Capital Improvement Plan, approved by the board, will allow us to extend available funding to provide safe and healthy learning environments for more children in more District of Columbia neighborhoods — sooner. Modernizations and renovations at 11 schools have been successfully completed. We significantly reduced the persistent and troubling backlogs in the payroll department; by year’s end, we will have reviewed nearly 12,600 personnel records and provided more than 10,000 retroactive payments. Our food service program has received federal certification for the first time in three years and soon will provide breakfast to all DC children, while generating revenue for the system. We have assembled a very strong management team of professionals with many years of relevant experience with schools, corporations, and nonprofit and government sectors.
GOAL 2: ENSURE MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS SUPPORT HIGH-QUALITY TEACHING AND LEARNING IN EVERY CLASSROOM IN EVERY SCHOOL

Efforts to improve management and operations occur behind the scenes, out of public view, but they are the essential underpinnings of teaching and learning. When these basic needs are not met, it is hard to expect students to be reading, writing, and doing math and science at high levels. When we get these operational details right, it will send a strong signal to staff and the community that our goals and strategies are more than words on a page.

The overall approach is framed by several key principles:

- Accelerate reform efforts by adopting and adapting best management practices from other school systems and corporations.
- Integrate each management system with all other systems.
- Align all management systems with academic goals.
- Ensure all management systems have excellent customer service.

This approach means we will be problem solvers, working on the issues in front of us, not choosing a one-size-fits-all model of reform.

STRATEGY 1: Develop and maintain a procurement system that enables the easy and quick purchase of goods and services while ensuring the best value through competitive processes.

By September 2005:

Implement the Phoenix Project. This major reform effort will totally transform our procurement system and has the potential to save $1.5 million in the 2005–06 school year. Increased automation (see PASS, page 26) will allow schools and offices to get the goods and services they need much more easily and quickly while allowing procurement staff to better focus their expertise. The current process treats the purchase of pencils the same as the renovation of buildings. Now, staff members spend a disproportionate amount of time dealing with the 80 percent of transactions that are routine, repetitive and usually low-cost. The new system will enable staff to focus their time on the other 20 percent — high-dollar contracts, where major savings are possible.

Speed supplies to principals. Through a partnership with American Express, principals will be able to order office and instructional supplies online, reducing delivery times from 30 days or more to three days.
From September 2005 through August 2006:

Develop a contract database. This will allow advanced planning for contract renewals before any lapse in service is experienced.

Revise outdated regulations. The Board of Education and the city council will partner to rewrite procurement rules and regulations, some of which date back to the 1950s and require multiple layers of bureaucratic signoffs for even minor purchases.

From September 2006 through August 2007:

Better use our buying power. DCPS will develop an annual procurement plan to take advantage of our consolidated buying power — buying supplies for the whole system, not school by school, office by office. This will result in millions of dollars of annual savings.

Standardize routine purchases. Continued implementation of strategic sourcing will further standardize our processes for routine purchases, reduce delivery times and decrease the volume of transactions so that staff can focus on major purchases.

Going Forward:

Ultimately, DCPS wants its procurement system to be in the top quartile of school districts and generate annual savings of 1 to 2 percent.

Strategy 2: Develop and maintain a superior human resources system to ensure the district maintains a highly qualified workforce.

By September 2005:

Early recruitment of teachers and administrators. By disbursing funds six months earlier than usual this year, we are hiring the best-qualified staff and avoiding the traditional last-minute scramble to finish hiring staff after fall classes have begun. Our recruitment efforts are focused on high-need areas, such as students who have disabilities or are learning to speak English.

Improve operations and customer satisfaction. Standardized job classifications will be developed to help evaluate employee performance, and standard operating procedures will improve communication with the schools.
From September 2005 through August 2006:

**Fully automate human resources and payroll systems.** A new payroll system, developed with the city, will ensure employees are paid accurately and on time. The system also will keep accurate and timely information on staff vacancies (it can now take up to three months to retrieve such information), as well as keeping accurate employee records (the current system, in which the same information is entered by multiple offices, invites mistakes), to better serve employee needs and give management more effective tools and data.

**Develop new system for Schedule A.** The new system, developed in collaboration with the city’s chief financial officer, will ensure we have accurate and up-to-date records on full-time employees. In the past, DCPS has been unable to fulfill these statutory requirements and current reports have taken up to four months to produce.

From September 2006 through August 2007:

**Strengthen certification and compliance.** With effective technology in place, DCPS will be able to ensure all educators are fully certified by 2007; monitor compliance with licensing and certification rules; and apply cost savings to support critical staffing needs, such as special education.

**Going Forward:**

**Focus on best practices.** Once we create a more solid foundation, we will focus on adopting best practices for recruitment that respond more quickly to schools’ needs, allow for better advance planning and budgeting, and ensure more effective oversight of spending.

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**Strategy 3:** Develop and maintain a facilities system that ensures schools are clean, safe, healthy, educationally appropriate and anchors of their communities.

By September 2005:

**Immediate maintenance activities.** DCPS is embarking on a major maintenance program over the summer that includes the following:

- Critical painting projects at 32 schools
- Auditorium/gymnasium repairs (including flooring) at 11 schools
- Grounds improvements (parking, lighting, playgrounds) at 11 schools
- Grass cutting and landscaping at all schools
- Deep cleaning at 39 summer-school sites
From September 2005 through August 2006:

Develop a Master Education Plan. This comprehensive document will ensure that the city is making the best use of all of its school facilities from an educational perspective. Developed with parents, residents, city agencies, charter schools, libraries, the University of the District of Columbia and other community stakeholders, this document will examine demographic trends and the continuum of learning needs, from preschool through college, to build strategies for the most effective uses of our space. The Master Education Plan will be incorporated into an updated Master Facilities Plan, which will align DCPS’ educational requirements with available school space. This may include identifying space for “wraparound services” (health, recreation, employment) for students, families and neighbors, as well as consolidations and closures. (Also in Goal 1, see page 6.)

Continue major improvements at 19 schools. As part of the newly approved Transition Capital Improvement Plan, which is designed to reverse years of neglect and ensure that more of our students have adequate space for learning, 12 schools will be modernized. At seven additional schools, major components — such as roofs, HVAC, bathrooms, windows and doors — will be repaired or replaced. (School list, page 24.)

Reduce backlogs in maintenance. Our Transition Capital Improvement Plan has budgeted $151.5 million over the next several years for major maintenance (replacing major systems such as boilers, chillers, roofs or windows), small capital projects (minor remodeling, such as science lab upgrades and open space enclosures) and compliance with court-ordered mandates such as asbestos abatement.

Create a Strategic Funding Opportunities Office. This new office will foster innovative public-private partnerships to generate new funding alternatives for our capital improvement plan. For example, DCPS campuses might be used to provide affordable housing near public schools for teachers, police officers and firefighters. We estimate that about 20 DCPS campuses, including Hope VI sites, can potentially be developed in this way.

Save energy costs. The Energy Savings for Kids initiative will allow us to install new efficient windows, heating and air conditioning units, temperature control systems, and lighting, which will provide improved learning environments in our schools and yield significant cost savings for the school district.

From September 2006 through August 2007:

Undertake major work at 14 additional schools. Fourteen more schools are scheduled for major work, although this may be modified depending on the findings of the Master Education Plan. We also will continue reductions in maintenance backlogs. (School list, page 24.)

Going Forward:

Continue implementing priority modernizations and systemic rehabilitations from our Transition Capital Improvement Plan. By FY 2010, we expect that 44 additional schools will be up to standard: 10 high schools, seven middle schools, three junior high schools and 24 elementary schools. (School list, page 24.)
**Modernizing and Rehabilitating Our Schools**

**Completed Modernizations**
- Oyster Elementary
- Barnard Elementary
- Cleveland Elementary
- Key Elementary
- McKinley Senior High
- Miner Elementary
- Noyes Elementary
- Patterson Elementary
- Randle Highlands Elementary (Phases 1A, 1B & 2)
- Kelly Miller Middle

**Completed Renovation:**
*Prospect Learning Center*

**Ongoing Modernizations**
- Thomson Elementary
- Bell Senior High
- Lincoln Middle
- Brightwood Elementary
- Luke C. Moore Academy Senior High

**Planned Modernizations (FY 2006–11)**
- Randle Highlands Elementary (1911 Administration Building – Phase 3)
- Sousa Middle
- Hardy

**Middle/Fillmore Arts** • **H.D. Cooke Elementary** • **Wheatley Elementary** • **H.D. Woodson Senior High** • **Cardozo High** • **Anacostia Senior High** • **School Without Walls** • **Roosevelt Senior High** • **Woodrow Wilson Senior High (FY 2009–12)** • **Coolidge Senior High**

**Stabilizations Plan (FY 2006)**
- Walker-Jones Elementary*
- Turner Elementary*

**Systemic Rehabilitations (2006–08)**
- Birney Elementary
- Thomas Elementary
- Deal Junior High
- MacFarland Middle
- Kramer Middle

**Systemic Rehabilitations (2008–11)**
- R.H. Terrell Junior High*
- Ross Elementary
- Smothers Elementary
- Slowe Elementary
- Stanton Elementary
- Raymond Elementary
- Draper Elementary
- Bowen Elementary
- Hearst Elementary
- C.W. Harris Elementary*
- Browne Junior High
- Shaw Junior High (Phase 1, FY 2011; Phase 2, FY 2012)

* Potential public-private partnership

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**Strategy 4:** Develop and maintain a safety and health system to provide safe, healthy and orderly environments for students and teachers.

By September 2005:

**Transition security to Metropolitan Police Department (MPD).** Security is being transitioned from a private company to the MPD to improve safety, build our in-house capacity and strengthen our partnership with the city. We will explore similar partnerships with community-based organizations. As part of the transition, a detailed standard operating procedures manual will describe the daily roles and responsibilities of school resource officers, uniformed security guards, DCPS security staff and school administrators to help maintain discipline and security in our schools.

**Develop responses to a broader set of threats.** DCPS must prepare for a broader range of threats because of our location in the nation’s capital. We will amend the school security manual and detail appropriate school-specific actions in response to a continuum of potential threats. These standard procedures will provide detailed guidance on proper initial responses and on methods to quickly contact and obtain additional assistance.
From September 2005 through August 2006:

Develop new discipline policies. Working with the academic and accountability departments, we will conduct a detailed review of DCPS discipline policies. This effort, which will include addressing in- and out-of-school suspensions and expulsions, will lead toward a model policy that will help improve student behavior and ensure that all students’ instructional needs are being met. Automated systems that share and analyze disciplinary incident reports will provide data to refine prevention strategies.

From September 2006 through August 2007:

Continue to improve practices. We will refine sharing of data protocols; update and revise contingency plans based on updated assessments; develop increased training with school staff; and support city agencies to ensure coordinated responses to incidents.

Going Forward:

Move from reaction to prevention. The overall thrust of the security program is to move toward prevention, providing engaging learning environments with a wide range of supports for students. Strategies will be developed to continue to move the system in this direction.

Strategy 5: Develop and maintain a coordinated and transparent resource management system that responds to the school district’s educational priorities and maximizes the school district’s resources.

From September 2005 through August 2006:

Revise the Weighted Student Formula (WSF). In 1999, DCPS began using a WSF as a way to promote a more equitable allocation of resources based on the needs of individual students and schools. At the same time, DCPS gave local schools more responsibility for allocating resources as part of a school-based management structure. Concerns have been raised among administrators, local school staff and parents that the WSF and its implementation does not appropriately support student achievement, that the balance between central supervision and local school autonomy does not occur in the right places, and that the process currently suffers from a lack of equity and transparency. Revisions to the management approach and accompanying WSF will reflect the refocused mission of DCPS, new plans for instruction, the Business Plan for Strategic Reform, and the need to restore public confidence in the equity and transparency of the process.

Revise the performance-based budgeting structure. In the past year, DCPS implemented a performance-based budgeting structure to ensure our funds are strategically allocated to meet our goals. The new Master Education Plan, which will map out the most strategic use of DCPS facilities in the years ahead (school list, page 24), will have major implications for the structure of our budget. We will revise the budget after the Master Education Plan is completed.
Complete a payroll audit. We expect this effort will identify up to $5 million in savings and set the stage for a fully automated payroll system that will ensure accurate and timely compensation for all employees.

Eliminate back payment problems. A backlog of retroactive payments to employees and vendors has developed over the last several years. DCPS will put in place an automated system for calculating these entitlements, eliminating the backlog and preventing future problems with automatic "step" raises.

**From September 2006 through August 2007:**

Eliminate problematic financial regulations. The Board of Education and the city will collaboratively develop a legislative proposal to modify statutory regulations and policies that are burdensome, confusing and conflicting.

Going Forward:

Increase transparency and accountability. We will increase public access to our budget information in at least two ways. First, as our information technology allows, we will post all central office and school budgets online, allowing for improved community understanding and oversight. DCPS also will publish year-end reports that compare budgeted to actual expenditures.

**Strategy 6:** Develop and maintain an integrated informational management system to ensure all staff have timely and accurate information needed for decisions.

By September 2005:

Track student data. Basic components of the student information system (DC-STARS) will be implemented, helping to support the district's attendance and truancy policies.

Wire the schools. By September, 34 additional schools will be wired, ensuring that every classroom has access to the Internet. Virtually all schools should be wired by the end of the 2005–06 school year.

**From September 2005 through August 2006:**

Implement Procurement Automated Support System (PASS). The system, developed in collaboration with city agencies and the chief financial officer, will allow schools to order and track the delivery of supplies online — from toilet paper to textbooks. This should reduce delivery times from an average of six months to 20 days; allow our procurement office to focus on negotiating discounts on big-ticket purchases (instead of being bogged down in tracking thousands of low-cost items); and set the stage for the automation of our human resources, payroll and student information systems.
From September 2006 through August 2007:

Complete information technology (IT) plan. DCPS will develop its first comprehensive, integrated technology plan to ensure that all stakeholders — principals, teachers, support staff, parents and students — can rely on timely information. We currently are 10–15 years behind industry norms; this blueprint will help us close the gap.

Build staff capacity. DCPS will mount a campaign to aggressively recruit and retain high-quality staff in a very competitive market. Staffing upgrades are essential to implementing our technology plan and delivering timely supports to schools and administrative offices alike.

Going Forward:

Build technology infrastructure. DCPS will work on a full build-out of the technology infrastructure envisioned by the IT plan, including development of a data warehouse that will provide one-stop, real-time information to all stakeholders: Principals and teachers can monitor student performance, parents can look for the latest report card, students can catch up on assignments, and administrators can track budgets. Once we have the basic building blocks in place, we will focus on steadily upgrading our systems to industry best practices.
GOAL 3: CREATE A CULTURE OF TRANSPARENCY, OPEN COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION TO SUPPORT HIGH-QUALITY TEACHING AND LEARNING IN EVERY CLASSROOM IN EVERY SCHOOL

Working collaboratively with a responsible community requires the transparency that builds effective communication and trust — essential to any collaboration — and makes it possible for everyone to be on the same page. To establish this culture of transparency and open communication, we will work through partnerships that engage individuals in schools and the community in support of student learning.

At a minimum, unless employees at every level of the system — from custodians to senior members of the superintendent’s cabinet — understand the school district’s priorities and their roles in meeting those goals, they are denied a basis for passionate commitment. Unless parents, school partners and other members of the community know where we are headed — and how specifically they can support our work — it will be virtually impossible to synchronize our efforts or to achieve our ambitious goals for improved student achievement. Unless all audiences, internal and external, receive timely, accurate information about progress and challenges, it will be difficult to maintain the focus or level of enthusiasm and hope required to sustain our reforms.

During Year 1, we will emphasize getting the basics right: building staff capacity; creating the infrastructure and networks that will allow us to communicate cost-effectively and quickly with multiple stakeholders; developing the core materials that both explain our work and suggest how recipients can support it; establishing the mutual relationships that invite participation from across the city; and listening better to understand information needs and partnership opportunities inside and outside the schools. This work will be aided by borrowing best practices from elsewhere or re-establishing best practices from past DCPS administrations. During Years 2–5, we will gradually build many avenues for stakeholder feedback and participation so that together we improve our children’s future.

Key Actions and Initiatives

Basic Communications
Top priorities are to re-establish consistent and effective internal and external communications — fact sheets and other informational materials, Web, Channel 28, media, and community briefings — and to launch a yearlong campaign to mobilize the community around our challenging new standards, tests and curriculum materials.

Parent and Family Involvement
A new office will be devoted to parent involvement and five new parent resource centers that will help parents become more active and effective advocates for their children.
Community Partnerships
We will be working proactively with a wide range of city agencies, civic organizations and others to improve coordination among the many initiatives affecting youth, from early childhood programs to schools serving as hubs for mental health and other social services. A business advisory committee will help guide our communications and outreach efforts. The superintendent will establish citywide coalitions of parent and community groups that advocate for all children.

Making Progress
The most visible and far-reaching accomplishment is our extensive collaboration with the DC Education Compact. This unique partnership, led by the Fannie Mae Foundation, has provided an important vehicle for the community to speak with a single voice about its priorities for educational improvements … and, just as important, to commit human and financial resources to back up their commitments. Joint efforts to develop budgets and facilities plans connected to our academic priorities have demonstrated a new level of harmony between school leaders and elected officials — the school board, mayor, city council, Congress and the Bush administration. We are working more closely with the charter school community. Our new learning standards are being developed with extensive participation from teachers, principals, parents and others in the community. Our budget and facilities plans have been readable and transparent; we now are developing reader-friendly parent guides to our new academic standards and tests. And partnerships with early education providers have allowed us to add 400 seats for youngsters who will benefit from this head start.
GOAL 3: CREATE A CULTURE OF TRANSPARENCY, OPEN COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION TO SUPPORT HIGH-QUALITY TEACHING AND LEARNING IN EVERY CLASSROOM IN EVERY SCHOOL

Four principles will guide our communications and partnerships:

- **Transparency and accountability.** The schools belong to the public we serve. We have the responsibility to communicate to the public what we are doing to improve student learning, why we chose each course of action and how partners can help us achieve success. Poor communication creates an aura that is both noninclusive and nonresponsive. Transparency also means that we provide readily accessible, comprehensive data so that the community may hold us accountable for making steady progress.

- **Shared information.** Employees have a right to know what the administration is doing without having to rely on the evening news or morning newspaper. This is true for all stakeholders. At a minimum, we must provide timely, complete and relevant information to all — employees, students, parents, neighbors and the city — and create regular opportunities for feedback.

- **Teamwork and partnerships.** We can reach our ambitious goals only by working together, whether it is through efficient internal teams; collaborating with city agencies to offer "wraparound" health and human services to students and families; engaging parents and families in school-based partnerships; strengthening coalitions to ensure that all children come to kindergarten ready to learn; or joining with the business sector to create opportunities for students to leave high school prepared for good careers, even if they do not go to college immediately.

- **Participation.** We commit to providing multiple opportunities for all partners to be directly involved in supporting student learning — from a single parent or family member helping a child meet the learning standards to teachers, parents and community members serving on districtwide and school-based decision-making councils.

**Strategy 1:** Ensure that all stakeholders — internal and external — receive timely, accurate and strategic information and have regular opportunities to provide input and participate in important decisions.

*By September 2005:*

**Create basic materials.** Short summaries will provide essential information on issues such as our vision and strategic priorities, standards, testing, course options, school success stories, immunizations, calendar, directory, budget, facilities, NCLB parental choice and tutoring options, out-of-boundary applications, and so on. The lack of such basic information is the source of much frustration inside and outside of our schools.
Strengthen the infrastructure for disseminating information. Having the information is not enough. We need to do a much better job of distributing it to internal and external audiences. A top priority is to begin rebuilding the DCPS Web site as a one-stop resource for useful and timely information. Other immediate priorities: making better use of e-mail and Channel 28 to distribute information to employees and outside stakeholders.

Establish or refine basic policies and protocols for internal communications. These include processes for getting timely information from staff to the Office of Communications, publication and design guidelines for DCPS materials, crisis communications plans, phone trees, and media policies. We should be speaking with a consistent and coherent voice.

_from September 2005 through August 2006:_

Launch awareness campaign about the new standards and tests. We will implement a multilingual campaign that creates multiple opportunities for teachers, parent and family members, and others to learn more about the new learning standards, testing, curriculum and related academic priorities. This is our top priority this year. We will use materials (parent guides in six languages, Web, video), school meetings, church meetings, Channel 28, PSAs (TV, radio) and as many other communication avenues as possible. An intensive internal communications effort will prepare principals and teachers to educate parents. We will ask our partners to join with us to get this critical information out to the community.

Develop basic feedback channels. We will survey all staff and key external stakeholders about their communications needs and preferences. What information do they most need to help support student learning, and how do they want to receive the information? This input will help us customize our communications efforts for maximum impact with each group as well as set the stage for deeper levels of involvement going forward.

Create advocacy coalitions. The superintendent will establish citywide coalitions of parent and community groups that advocate for all children.

Host monthly meetings. These will allow the local media (including community newspapers) and the community to talk directly with the superintendent, cabinet members and other DCPS employees about topical issues.

Develop accountability report cards. A reader-friendly publication will report on student performance and the district’s progress in meeting the strategic plan’s goals. In addition, we will publish an annual community contributions scorecard, published jointly with the DC Education Compact, charting the investment that all sectors of the city are making to improve student achievement.

Expand key communications mechanisms. We will complete rebuilding the Web site, including working links to/for each school, and produce a regular Superintendent’s Corner show for employees on Channel 28.

Train staff to be better communicators. We will work initially with senior managers in the central office, helping them communicate with all audiences: principals, teachers, staff, parents, the media and others.

Solicit advice. We will explore various mechanisms for principals, teachers and staff to provide timely advice on major decisions.
From September 2006 through August 2007:

**Expand outreach.** We will revise and strengthen all communications materials and distribution channels based on feedback in Year 1. Depending on stakeholder interest, we may create customized portals on the Web site for each key audience; develop regular programming on Channel 28 for parents; or publish a calendar for parents (featuring student art) with key dates, benchmarks, information on standards and other key issues.

**Host accountability forums and expand online access to data.** The community forums will provide opportunities for the community to better understand how well the system is performing. An accessible and reliable information system will provide more timely access to key data about all schools and student educational outcomes.

**Reach out to students.** We will create campaigns specifically to communicate with and involve students, raising their awareness about the importance of education, the opportunities before them and their responsibilities as students. We will use student showcases to help craft youth-focused messages. One possibility for student participation: a student art contest conducted with community partners to develop holiday cards for public schools, the school board, the mayor, city council and others.

**Going Forward:**

**Increase outreach and participation.** Once the basics are in place, we will step up efforts to create opportunities for staff and community members to participate in major decisions affecting the schools. In addition to providing the kinds of basic information described above, any new materials will respond directly to what our internal and external audiences have said is most important for them to know.

**Strategy 2: Create multiple ways for parents and family members to be involved in supporting students and schools.**

By September 2005:

**Help set the standards.** Parent leaders will continue to play key roles in helping set the standards in science, social studies and the electives, just as they did in setting the standards in English language arts and mathematics. Having the parent voice at the table helps ensure that expectations are high and the language is jargon-free.

**Educate about the standards.** As part of our larger campaign about the new standards and tests (see Strategy 1, page 31), we will develop reader-friendly parent guides (in six languages) that will be distributed during summer registration. They will be the first step in a yearlong, multiphased effort to make sure parents know what their children are supposed to be learning, how they will be tested, and how parents can help at home and in school.

**Establish a first parent center.** We have budgeted for five new comprehensive parent resource centers, located throughout the city, which will bring together the services families need to ensure that their children are ready to learn and the family is able to support that learning. Lessons learned from a pilot center will help inform the rollout of four new centers in the 2006–07 school year.
From September 2005 through August 2006:

Create an office focused on parent outreach. The Office of Parent and Community Partnerships will promote, support and coordinate a range of sustained initiatives, developed by schools and civic organizations, to involve parents and other stakeholders in the work of the schools. The focus will be to provide multiple ways for parents to be informed and involved — as teachers and role models at home, volunteers, advocates, and decision-makers.

Welcome parents into the schools. We will establish policies and protocols that invite parents into the schools and classrooms as respected participants in their children’s education. We will create materials and workshops to help principals and teachers create welcoming environments for parents and families. A top priority will be to ensure that the Board of Education’s parent involvement policies are implemented in every school.

Train parent trainers–1. In concert with parent organizations and other partners, we will train an initial cadre of 20–30 parent leaders to explain the new standards and assessments to other parents at the school level. Parents learn more when they are taught by their peers.

From September 2006 through August 2007:

Support school-based parent organizations. We will work with the DC Education Compact and parent organizations to support and grow parent organizations for every school.

Train parent trainers–2. We will train a second cadre of parent leaders to work closely with other parents at the school level.

Train principals. As part of their ongoing professional development, principals will take workshops that focus on ways to create welcoming schools and involve parents.

Explore a parent leadership academy. We will study the feasibility of creating an institute devoted to the in-depth training of parents to be leaders in their neighborhoods and schools. We will seek partnerships for this effort.

Strategy 3: Create a system to encourage, evaluate and better coordinate partnerships so that all community efforts are aligned to the school district’s student achievement goals.

From September 2005 through August 2006:

Coordinate partnerships and services. We will create an Office of Parent and Community Partnerships to promote, support and coordinate a range of sustained initiatives to involve multiple stakeholders beyond parents: faith-based organizations, businesses, community-based and nonprofit organizations, service providers, governmental agencies, higher education institutions, and other city and national partners. Many of these potential alliances are discussed elsewhere as parts of Goals 1 and 2.
Create a citywide forum. Working with partners, we will establish a forum for regular communications and coordination among school, government and civic sectors to plan and implement mental health and child and youth service program delivery with city agencies, community-based organizations and service providers at the school level. This forum will be an important mechanism for coordinating the delivery of “wraparound” services that will support students and families ... and help schools become neighborhood anchors. (Also in Goal 1, see page 6.)

Establish a business advisory committee. This volunteer group, drawn from local businesses, will help ensure that our communications and outreach programs are guided by best practices.

From September 2006 through August 2007:

Establish advocacy coalitions. The superintendent will establish citywide coalitions of parent and community groups that advocate for all children.

Align out-of-school standards. Working with the many partners dedicated to our children, we will help develop curriculum and training modules for out-of-school providers aligned with our new DCPS learning standards.

Offer customer service training. We will invite local corporate partners to provide customer service training to school staff, starting with secretaries, security guards and principals.

Promote quality early childhood programs. We will join the city's Birth to Eight (City of Learning) initiative to help ensure that early childhood programs are high quality and prepare all students to enter kindergarten ready to learn. Many recent studies have confirmed how investments in early childhood education have a huge future payoff throughout high school and beyond.

Celebrate success. We will work with groups such as the DC Education Compact to sponsor an annual event celebrating the community's progress in meeting the school district's strategic priorities.

Going Forward:

Expand partnerships. We anticipate a continued expansion of opportunities for parents and others to be involved in supporting student performance — as mentors, volunteers, advocates, decision-makers and trainers, and in other roles. Among the anticipated priorities will be a partnership with the higher education and business sectors to develop a targeted outreach campaign to inform all DCPS junior, middle and high school students about their opportunities — and what they must do in school to prepare.
Paying for It

Our FY 2006 operating budget request, including the identification of Unmet Needs priorities, covers all of the Year 1 strategies and programs. It is now being considered by the city council. Our Transition Capital Improvement Plan, now being considered by the city council, covers the cost of the many facilities improvements we envision. In addition, Congress has provided an additional $29.6 million this year to help us address many of our academic priorities. Our FY 2007 budget, to be presented next fall, will address any currently unfunded program priorities for Year 2 and beyond. Investments by our private and philanthropic partners will make up some of the difference between what our students need and what elected officials already have committed. But ultimately, investing in our community’s future by investing in schools is the community’s responsibility. It’s time.

Conventional thinking says that DC Public Schools are adequately, even richly, funded. But the reality is that DC Public Schools historically have been under-funded — especially when compared to our city’s suburbs. For example, the Washington Lawyers’ Committee recently concluded that:

- Although DCPS enrolls a far higher percentage of students with special needs, such as low-income students (64%), than surrounding school districts such as Arlington (36%), Alexandria (47%), Fairfax (19%) and Montgomery County (23%), DCPS spends less per student than most of its neighbors.
- DCPS spends more than $3,800 less per student than Arlington; $2,100 less per student than Alexandria; $500 less than Montgomery County; and only $500 more than Fairfax County, where the percentage of low-income students is less than one-third of that enrolled in DC Public Schools.
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High-quality teaching and learning, supported by efficient management and operations ... and a culture of transparency, open communication and collaboration.