

# Building on Excellence:

A Starting Point Document to Inform  
Strategic Planning

*Recommendations from the Superintendent  
Based on His First 100 Days in Office*

Presented to the Hillsborough Township Board of Education  
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Jordan Schiff, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools

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## **Executive Summary**

### **Introduction**

The 100 Day Report is a document intended to outline the current status of the district in the areas of Education, Operations, and Human Resources. It is also intended to communicate my recommendations for action in each of these areas. These three areas represent the major focus of school district operations. Although this report is far from exhaustive, it is comprehensive enough to provide the board an opportunity to consider the complexities of how a district functions. The report also provides the starting points for how we can build upon our district's strengths and attend to its weaknesses.

This document is also intended to be a "springboard" for the strategic planning process. Strategic planning is a process where a cross-section of the community develops a new vision and goals for the district. It is an opportunity for the community to participate in the long-range planning for the school system. When the process of developing a strategic plan is completed in a manner where broad consensus is reached, then the plan accurately reflects the priorities of the community and will be used as a guide post for administrative decision-making, policy development, and resource allocation.

### **Recommendations**

The following is a listing of my recommendations based upon an analysis of district functions including, but not limited to, direct observation of instruction, discussions with administrators, board members, parents, and teachers, reading of various documents published by the district, and a review of student achievement data.

## **Chapter 1: Education**

### **Section 1.1: Student Achievement**

- Develop a systematic approach for collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and reporting student achievement information.
- Maintain common assessments that are grade level and subject or course specific.
- Maintain a data warehouse for the purpose of supporting informed decision-making at the student, class, grade, building, and district levels.
- Develop goals that are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely (SMART) which clearly address the needs of our students by using both quantitative and qualitative measures of student performance.
- Develop metrics that measure academic growth in a manner that is broadly supported by teachers, parents, and administrators. These metrics must be research-based and use multiple measures throughout the year, rather than using only summative assessments at the conclusion of the year.

### **Section 1.2: Technology**

- Install in each classroom throughout the district the appropriate digital equipment so that students can see and hear any digital image or sound the teacher wishes to use during classroom instruction.
- Develop a plan to effectively integrate technology into instructional practice, including clear expectations for how technology is to be used in the classroom.
- Fund an “Innovative Practice” mini-grant program to encourage our professional staff to innovate and take risks using emerging technologies to enhance and enrich learning in compelling ways.
- Explore strategies for asynchronous learning opportunities for students to engage in learning activities outside the regular classroom period.
- Globalize the curriculum by allowing teachers the opportunity to collaborate with educators from around the world, making real-time contact through video conferencing a common practice.
- Provide all teachers with portable computer devices within the next four years.
- Explore the possibility of providing one-to-one computers for all of students in grades 5 through 12 within the next five years
  - Using value added e-textbooks as the primary text for instruction, rather than paper text.
  - Becoming more digitally proficient and less reliant on paper and pencil tasks.
- Provide staff development for certificated and non-certificated staff to ensure adequate understanding of the software and hardware used throughout the district and clearly communicate the expectations for the effective use of technology for both educational and administrative purposes.

### **Section 1.3: Staff Development**

- Commit to a teacher-training-teachers model of staff development and provide the necessary resources and release time to provide high quality, job embedded, differentiated staff development for the teachers aligned directly to district and school/department goals.
- Utilize Professional Learning Communities (PLC) to engage in professional discussions involving evidence of student learning, and provide a venue for collaboration and collegial decision-making regarding matters important to student learning and professional development.
- Provide consistent staff development opportunities for school and district administrators that are uniquely designed to the challenges of educational leadership

### **Section 1.4: Programs**

- Institute a world language program at the elementary schools
- Implement a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) program for all students at the middle school level, modeled after the RoboRaiders high school club

## **Chapter 2: Operations**

### **Section 2.1: Finance**

- Maintain a budget within the 2% levy cap that meets the educational needs for the students of Hillsborough Township
- Utilize 50% of the savings from Green Initiatives (see below) to fund innovative practices as discussed in the Technology section below and the other 50% to support property tax relief
- Take advantage of federal, state, and local grant opportunities
- Investigate and implement, when applicable, revenue generating activities that are aligned with the district's mission
- Fully implement Systems 3000 financial software system for all budget development processes

### **Section 2.2: Facilities**

- Implement the facilities plan to repair/maintain all capital structures within the next five years
- Develop a comprehensive preventative maintenance plan
- Establish a clearly articulated priority ordered listing of capital and maintenance projects that will be funded and completed over the next five years
- Implement a painting schedule to have all rooms and hallways receive a fresh coat of paint every five years
- Collaborate with the Home/School Associations (HSA) to support beautification projects throughout the district.
- Establish a variety of Green Initiatives (Environmental Sound Practices) including:
  - Evaluate all energy consumption by benchmarking at all facilities and compare energy savings annually by building
  - Expand heating/cooling control systems to the schools not under Energy for America's supervision
  - Institute behavioral change practices district-wide to promote energy savings
  - Complete comprehensive energy audit for all district facilities
  - Implement a Power Purchase Agreement to allow solar panel use on the school roofs allowing the district to reduce its electric costs and replace roofs (and possibly install air-conditioning) without additional costs to the taxpayers

### **Section 2.3: Governance**

- Schedule two regular board action meetings per month (preferably the first and third Thursday of the month)
- Eliminate work session meetings and replace with clear documented minutes of committee meetings including recommended action items published on the website for board member review and public viewing

- Consolidate current committee structure to the three following committees:
  - Operations (Business Administrator, Administrative Liaison)
  - Education (Asst. Supt. for Curriculum, Administrative Liaison)
  - Human Resources (Asst. Supt. for Personnel, Administrative Liaison)
- All board members will be full members of one of the three standing committees
- The administration will draft all committee meeting minutes for the committees' approvals
- At the end of the school year, each committee will provide a listing of all action items completed in the year, thereby clearly documenting for the board and public the activities completed by each board committee
- All meeting minutes, with appropriate redactions as required by law, will be posted on the website for reviewing with ease and increasing transparency

### **Chapter 3: Human Resources**

#### **Section 3.1: Personnel**

- Revise the Teacher Evaluation document to reflect current best practices in teacher evaluation and comply with anticipated changes from the Department of Education (DOE)
- Revise the Principal Evaluation document to reflect current best practices in school leader evaluation and comply with anticipated changes from the DOE
- Institute a support staff professional development program, so that secretaries and clerical assistants can develop and hone their skills
- Initiate a Teacher Leadership Institute for the purpose of developing the future leaders of our schools

As mentioned at the beginning of this document, the 100 Day Report is meant as a starting point for discussion, not an end point. The recommendations listed above are meant to stimulate conversation and debate. They are not intended to stifle analyses that may be different than my own. I encourage open debate and hope that this report will add value to our district.

## **Introduction**

The 100 Day Report is a document intended to consider the current status of the district in the areas of Education, Operations, and Human Resources. It is also intended to communicate my recommendations for action in each of these areas. These three areas represent the major areas of school district operations. Although this report is far from exhaustive, it is comprehensive enough to provide the Board an opportunity to consider the complexities of how a district functions. The report also provides the starting points for how we can build upon our district's strengths and attend to its weakness.

This document is also intended to be a "springboard" for the strategic planning process. Strategic planning is a process where a cross-section of the community develops a new vision and goals for the district. It is an opportunity for the community to participate in the long-range planning for the school system. When the process of developing a strategic plan is completed in a manner where broad consensus is reached, then the plan accurately reflects the priorities of the community and will be used as a guide post for administrative decision-making, policy development, and resource allocation.

It is important to note, that not all areas of our vast array of programs that are offered to our students have been addressed in this document. Because an area is not addressed in this report does not mean that it is not appreciated, quite the contrary. During my first few months in the district I have met with and observed programs that are nothing short of outstanding. The athletics, fine and performing arts programs, co-curricular, and club activities that our students enjoy are some of the finest that I have seen in my 20 years of experience working in schools. We truly have much to admire. Hillsborough has an excellent reputation throughout the state of New Jersey. I now know that it is well deserved!

## **Transition Plan**

On January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2011 I presented the Board with a detailed Transition Plan which guided my actions for the first 100 days of my employment. The purpose of the Transition Plan was to help guide me as I met the many individuals who have an important stake in the Hillsborough School District. The following outline details the activities that I have completed during my first 100 days:

1. Listening to Stakeholders
  - a. Met individually with each member of BOE
  - b. Met individually with each administrator
    - i. Gained their insights
    - ii. Reviewed goals
    - iii. Reviewed staffing
    - iv. Reviewed staff development activities
    - v. Reviewed enrollments
    - vi. Discussed how we can communicate effectively
    - vii. Scheduled future Leadership Team Meetings

- c. Met with the following township and county officials to reinforce our cooperative relationship and open lines of communication
  - i. Mayor
  - ii. Township Administrator
  - iii. Township Health and Human Services Official
  - iv. Township Code Official
  - v. Township Librarian
  - vi. County Prosecutor
  - vii. Fire Chief
  - viii. Police Chief
  - ix. Recreation Director
- d. Made periodic site visits to each school
  - i. Toured the facilities
  - ii. Met with principals and teachers
  - iii. Ate lunch periodically with students
- e. Held periodic “Coffee with the Superintendent”
  - i. Informal discussions with the parents and community members to open dialogue and share thoughts
- f. Met with Executive County Superintendent
- g. Met with Somerset County Superintendents
- h. Met with teacher leaders at each school to open lines of communication and to begin a dialogue concerning how we can best meet the needs of our students
- i. Met with coaches and athletic director
- j. Met with senior citizen groups
- k. Met with student leaders at high and middle schools
- l. Attended faculty meetings at each school
- m. Met with parent leadership
  - i. Joint Council of Home/School Association
  - ii. Hillsborough Education Foundation
  - iii. Booster clubs (marching band / athletics / others)
- n. Met with Hillsborough Education Association leadership
- 2. Reviewed Strategic Plan
- 3. Curriculum/Instruction/Student Achievement
  - a. Reviewed the curriculum briefs
    - i. The development of briefs was assigned to district curriculum supervisors and directors
    - ii. These briefs were no longer than two pages summarizing the answers to the following questions:
      - 1. What are the strengths of your department?
      - 2. What are the challenges your department faces in the short and long terms?
      - 3. How do you know that your students are learning at the highest levels?
      - 4. How do you know if your students’ individual learning needs are being met?

- b. Completed monthly “walk and talks” with principals to tour the schools, informally connect with the teachers and students, and made myself available to the principals on a consistent, predictable basis
  - c. Reviewed current analysis of student achievement
  - d. Analyzed the following documents:
    - i. 2004 – 2010 NJASK results
    - ii. 2004 – 2010 HSPA results
    - iii. 2010 EOC Algebra I results
    - iv. 2010 EOC Biology results
    - v. 2007-2009 NJ Report Cards
  - e. Created the following documents
    - i. 2004-2010 Cohort Analysis of NJASK Results
    - ii. 2004-2010 Comparative Analysis to DFG I of All State Assessments
  - f. Reviewed progress towards achievement of adequate yearly progress in all disaggregated areas
4. Personnel/Staff Development
- a. Reviewed local staff development plan
  - b. Reviewed teacher evaluation model
  - c. Reviewed staffing matrix
  - d. Discussed renewal decision-making process
  - e. Identified teachers who have been disciplined since 2008 including
    - i. Disciplinary memo
    - ii. Increment withheld
    - iii. Tenure charges filed
  - f. Reviewed grievances and any other conflicts with the HEA since 2008
  - g. Reviewed all collective bargaining agreements
  - h. Identified all non-aligned employees
5. Governance
- a. Reviewed all board minutes since July 1, 2009
  - b. Reviewed board agenda development process
  - c. Reviewed committee agenda procedures and processes
  - d. Analyzed policy manual
    - i. All board polices and bylaws
    - ii. Evaluated timeliness updates
    - iii. Reviewed policy review procedures
    - iv. Reviewed policy distribution and implementation procedures
6. Technology
- a. Reviewed technology plan
  - b. Reviewed current inventory of hardware and software
  - c. Reviewed network topology
7. Legal
- a. Received briefing on claims against the district and agents of the district
  - b. Discussed with board solicitor the following
    - i. Special education meditation/due process actions
    - ii. Labor relations

1. Evaluative/disciplinary issues
2. Contract administration
3. Grievances
4. Matters in review by Public Employee Relation Commission (PERC) / administrative law judge / commissioner
5. Negotiations
- iii. Construction litigation
- iv. Board matters
8. Special Education
  - a. Reviewed all program options within district
  - b. Reviewed a sample Individual Education Plan (IEP)
  - c. Reviewed percentage of classified students by program type
  - d. Reviewed out-of-district placements
  - e. Identified federal and local funding of special education programs
  - f. Reviewed most recent monitoring report
9. Finance (Reviewed the following documents):
  - a. Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR)
  - b. audit recommendations from 2008-present
  - c. status of accounts report
  - d. fund balances from 2008-present
  - e. budget development process
  - f. student enrollments
  - g. demographer's most recent study
10. Facilities
  - a. Toured all facilities with facilities manager, head custodian, principal and business administrator
  - b. Reviewed
    - i. maintenance and facilities plans
    - ii. energy management plan / energy audit (if applicable)
    - iii. all green initiatives
  - c. Received status report of all current construction projects
11. Communications
  - a. Identified all means of building and district level communications
  - b. Reviewed communication methods to the following stakeholders:
    - i. Parents
    - ii. Teachers
    - iii. Community Members
    - iv. Students
  - c. Reviewed district/school presence on the web
  - d. Familiarized myself with the local reporters
  - e. Reviewed how board news is communicated to the public
12. Emergency Management
  - a. Reviewed emergency closing, early dismissal, and delayed opening procedures
  - b. Reviewed building and district level emergency plans

- c. Discussed incident command and the superintendent's role with fire and police chiefs, as well as, the local Office of Emergency Management
- d. Reviewed methods of in-district and out-of-district communications during a crisis
- e. Reviewed crises that have occurred since 2008

### **Immediate Critical Issues**

During the first 100 days, we needed to address two critical issues: developing the 2011-2012 school budget and negotiating the collective bargaining agreement between the board and the Hillsborough Education Association (HEA). Our work has led to an historic settlement agreement that allowed the board to better control the single largest cost driver in the budget: healthcare. The HEA agreed to increasing healthcare contributions from approximately 6% to 18% of annual premium costs over the life of the contract. This allowed us to avoid privatizing close to 270 of our employees while increasing our investments in staff development, curricular supplies, capital improvements, and technology.

The community supported our budget priorities and the sacrifices made by our employees and passed the school budget by close to a two to one margin. This level of overwhelming support strengthens my resolve to provide the highest quality of programs and experiences for our students. They deserve our best efforts.

The following report presents an analysis of district function, based on the Transition Plan outlined above. It is divided into three chapters each focused on one of the three pillars of district function: Education, Operations, and Human Resources. Each chapter is further divided into sections and within each section is a listing of particular tasks for the board's consideration as we revise the Strategic Plan.

## **Chapter 1: Education**

### **Section 1.1: Student Achievement**

My analysis of the achievement of the student body of the Hillsborough Township Public Schools began by examining the state assessment data from the spring of 2004 to the spring of 2010. I examined the average scaled score mean for all students, including special education students and English language learners. These scores were then ranked and compared with all other districts in either the State or the District Factor Group (DFG). The District Factor Group is a collection of approximately 90 districts in grades 3 – 8 and approximately 40 districts at the high school level that share the same socio-economic factors. Hillsborough is a member of the “I” DFG and is grouped with other high performing affluent suburban districts. Doing an analysis at the DFG level allows for comparisons with similar districts, rather than comparing our performance to all districts throughout the state.

Eight charts will be discussed. District-level aggregated data will be presented first for Language Arts Literacy, Mathematics, and Science. Then grade-level data will be discussed for each of the academic areas mentioned previously. Finally a cohort analysis will be presented for Language Arts and Mathematics that follows the same group of students for multiple years. Five different groups (cohorts) were examined for this report.

A word of caution is necessary for the reader. Analyses such as these can be very powerful and may lead the reader to jump to broad conclusions. These analyses represent a starting point for discussion, contemplation, and further research. Although longitudinal data allows us to examine patterns of performance on the State test, it is only one test, one indicator of student performance. Multiple indicators of student performance and drilling down to disaggregate data must be performed before reliable and valid conclusions can be drawn. Therefore, my first areas of focus for us to consider as we begin to revise the Strategic Plan are as follows:

- Develop a systematic approach for collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and reporting student achievement information
- Maintain common assessments that are grade level and subject or course specific
- Develop a system of data analysis protocols so that analysis of student achievement data is consistent from year to year allowing for high quality longitudinal data collection and analysis
- Maintain a data warehouse for the purpose of supporting informed decision-making at the student, class, grade, building, and district levels
- Develop SMART goals that clearly address the needs of our students by using both quantitative and qualitative measures of student performance
- Develop metrics that measure growth in a manner that is broadly supported by teachers, parents, and administrators. These metrics must be researched-based

and formative, rather than using only summative assessments at the conclusion of the year

## **2004-2010 Hillsborough Composite Testing Percentile State Rankings for Language Arts Literacy, Mathematics, and Science (Charts 1, 2, and 3)**

### **Methodology**

Charts 1-3 were developed by using publicly available data posted on the New Jersey Department of Education website using the State test data from the spring of 2004 to the spring of 2010. The “Total Student” scale score mean for each district in the state of New Jersey that had reportable results was rank ordered by grade, district, and subject tested. Percentile ranks were then calculated for each grade by subject. The percentile rankings for the district were then averaged for each year beginning in 2004 and ending in 2010. Those data were then charted by percentile ranking by year. It is important to note that for the language arts literacy (LAL) and mathematics, the charts reflect the State tests in grades 3, 4, 8, and 11 in years 2004 and 2005. The first year that grades 5-7 were tested in these areas was in 2006. Since 2006 grades 3-8 and 11 were tested in LAL and mathematics. Science data since 2004 has been tested and recorded in grades 4 and 8 only.

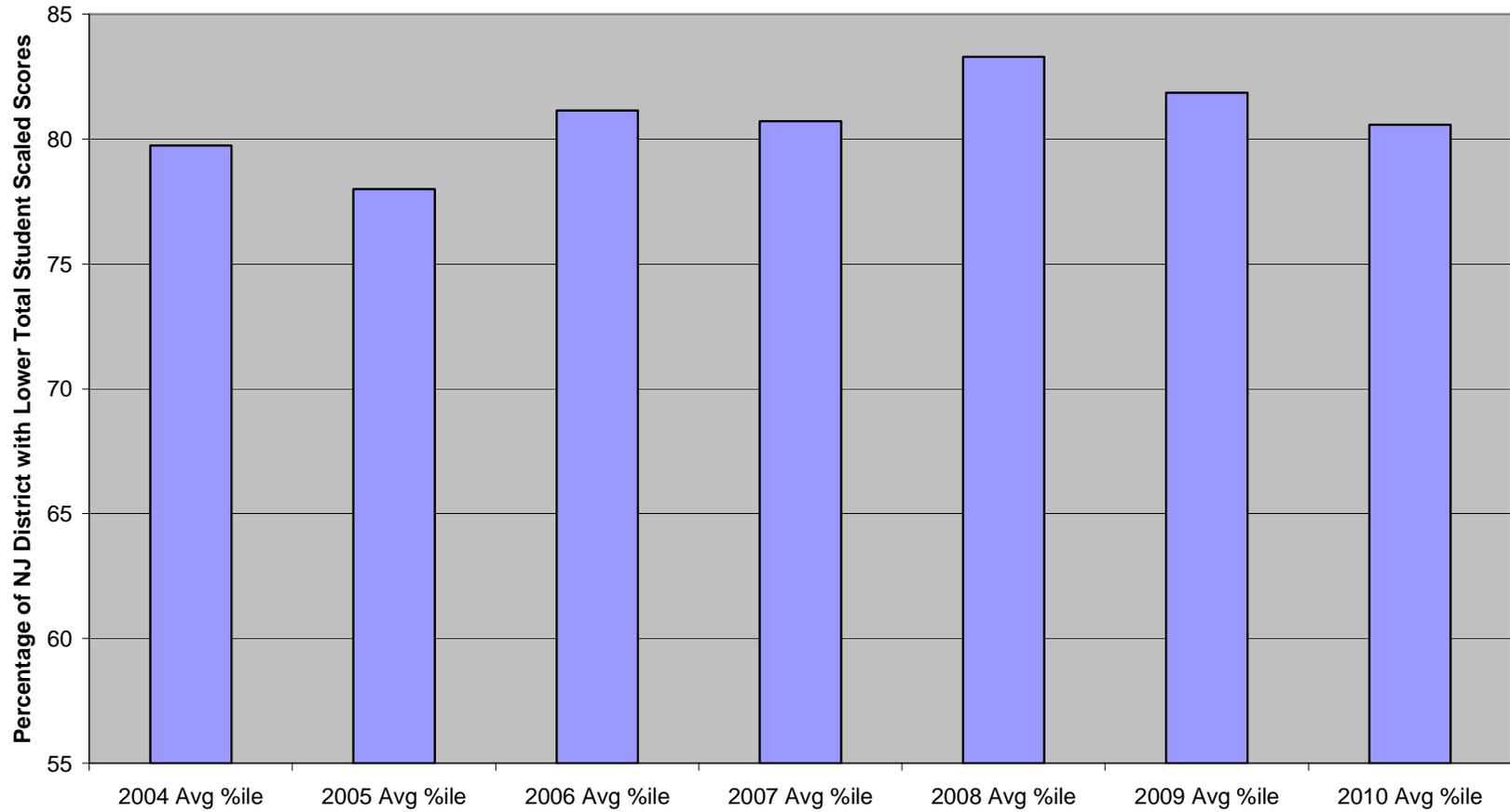
### **Observations**

District-wide language arts literacy performance (Chart 1) remains consistently strong. Performance was above the 80%ile of all districts in the state of New Jersey. Since 2006 performance in mathematics has been above the 75% state-wide with less consistency than LAL.

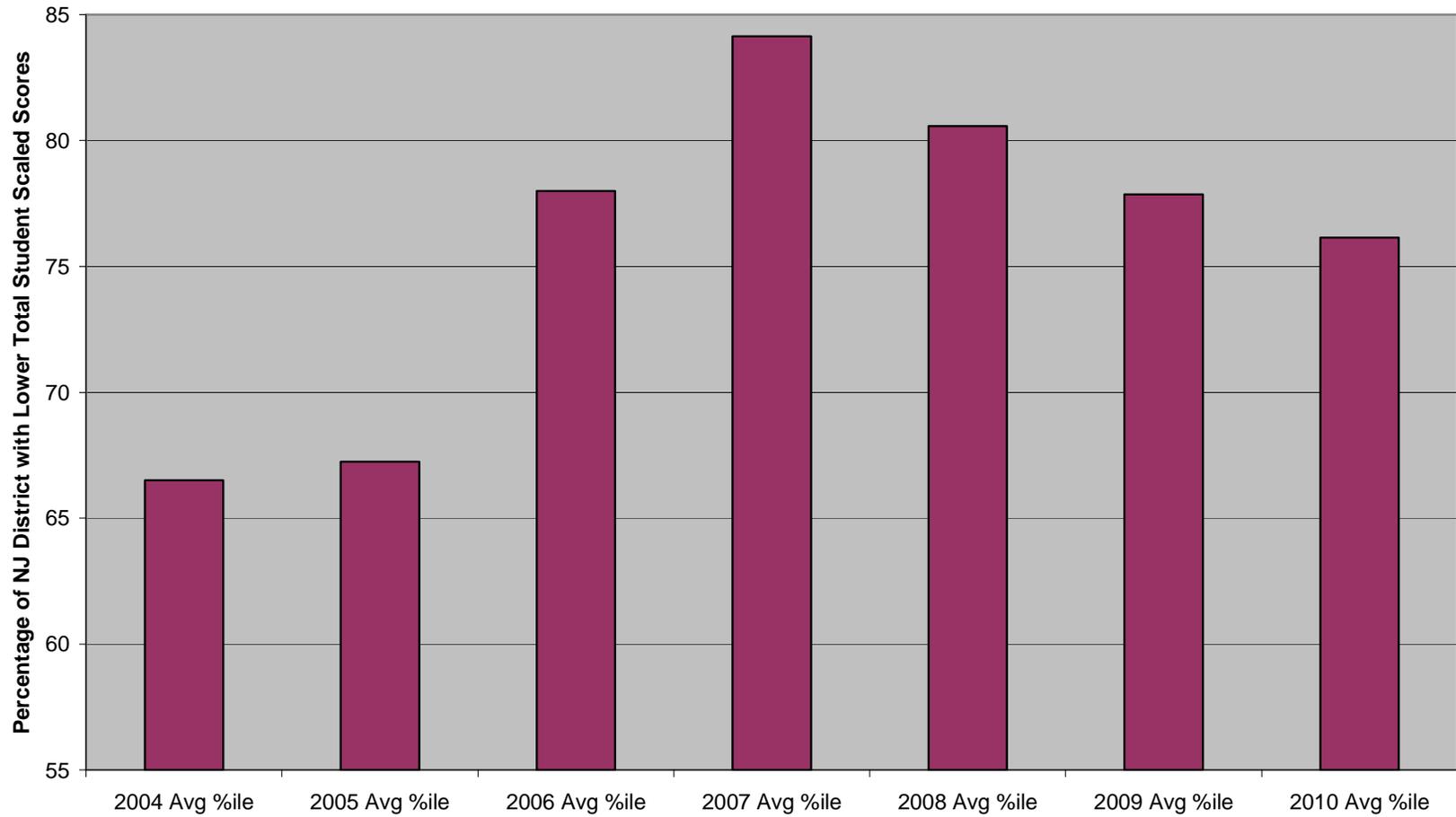
Appreciable inclines are recognized in years 2005-2007 in mathematics (Chart 2). Declining relative performance is realized since the maximum ranking was reached in 2007. Performance since 2006 has been above the 75%ile, peaking at 84%ile in 2007. Most recent evidence of student relative performance on the 2010 state examination in mathematics is less than a 10 percentile point decrease from 2007. The difference from 2007-2010 performance does not seem significant; however, the downward trend is cause for further research.

Science performance is low relative to the other two subject areas; however, comparisons are difficult to make due to the fact that only two grade levels are tested in this subject area. Similar to mathematics, the data in chart 3 is also trending downward during the three most recent years.

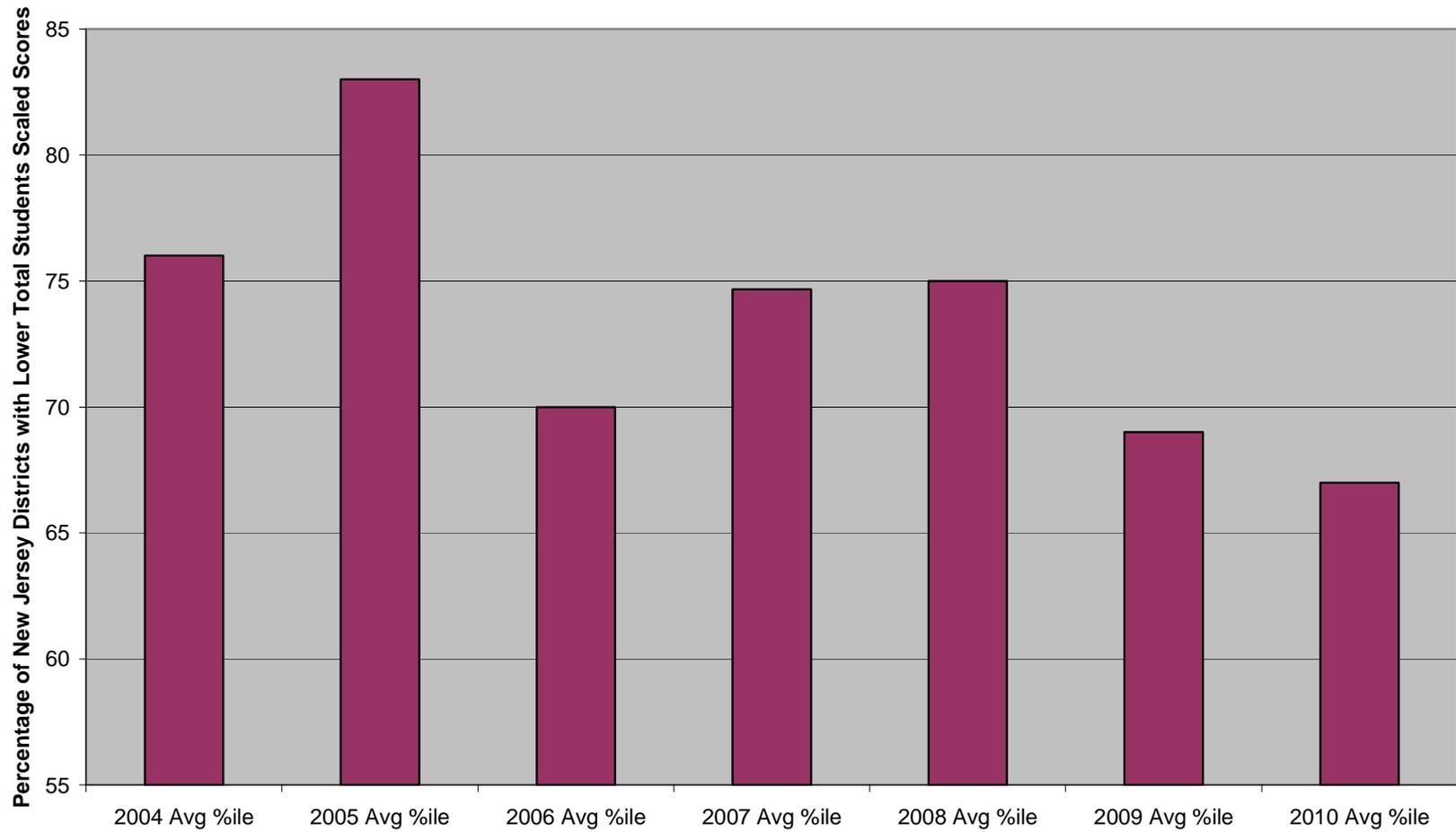
**2004-2010 Hillsborough Composite Testing Percentile State Ranking for Language Arts  
Literacy  
(Ranking of approximately 500 districts)  
Chart 1**



**2004-2010 Hillsborough Composite Testing Percentile State Ranking for Mathematics**  
**(Ranking of approximately 500 districts)**  
**Chart 2**



**2004-2010 Hillsborough Composite Testing Percentile State Ranking for Science  
(Ranking of approximately 500 districts)  
Chart 3**



## **2004-2010 State Testing Grade Level Results for Language Arts Literacy, Mathematics, and Science (Charts 4, 5, and 6)**

### **Methodology**

The same percentile ranking methodology was used with these three charts; however, the ranking compared our district with other I District Factor Group districts. These charts drill down to the grade levels showing between seven and five years worth of data for each subject area. As stated above only five years of data are available for grades 5, 6, and 7. In the first three charts the unit of analysis was the district, these three charts have the individual grade level as the unit of analysis.

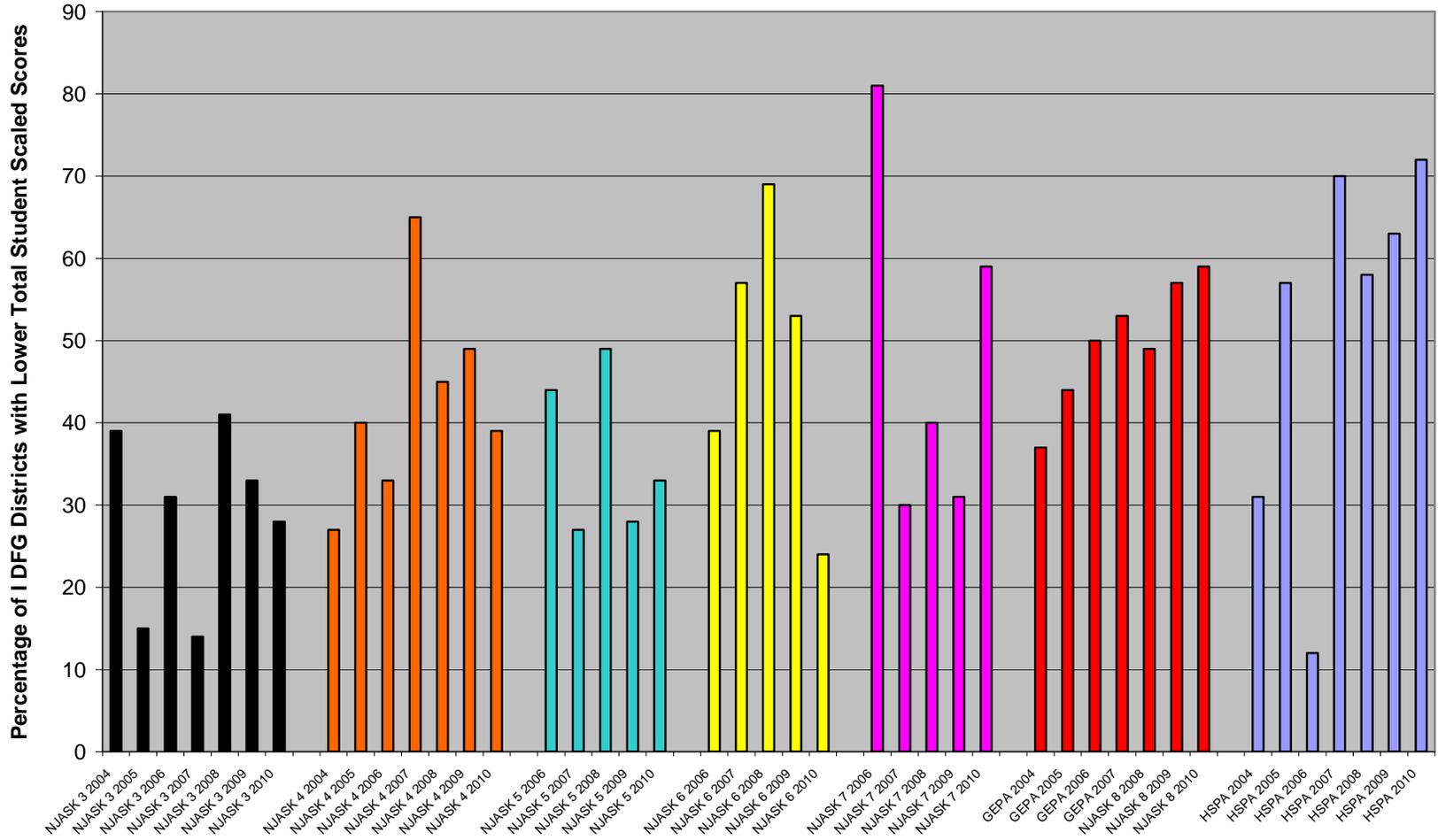
### **Observations**

Performance is consistently above the 50%ile in the most recent years in grades 8 and 11. Performance is consistently below the 50%ile in grades 3-5. Grades 6 and 7 show inconsistent performance ranging from a high of 80%ile in 2006 to a low of the 30%ile on the NJASK 7 in 2007. Similar spiking of achievement is seen in sixth grade.

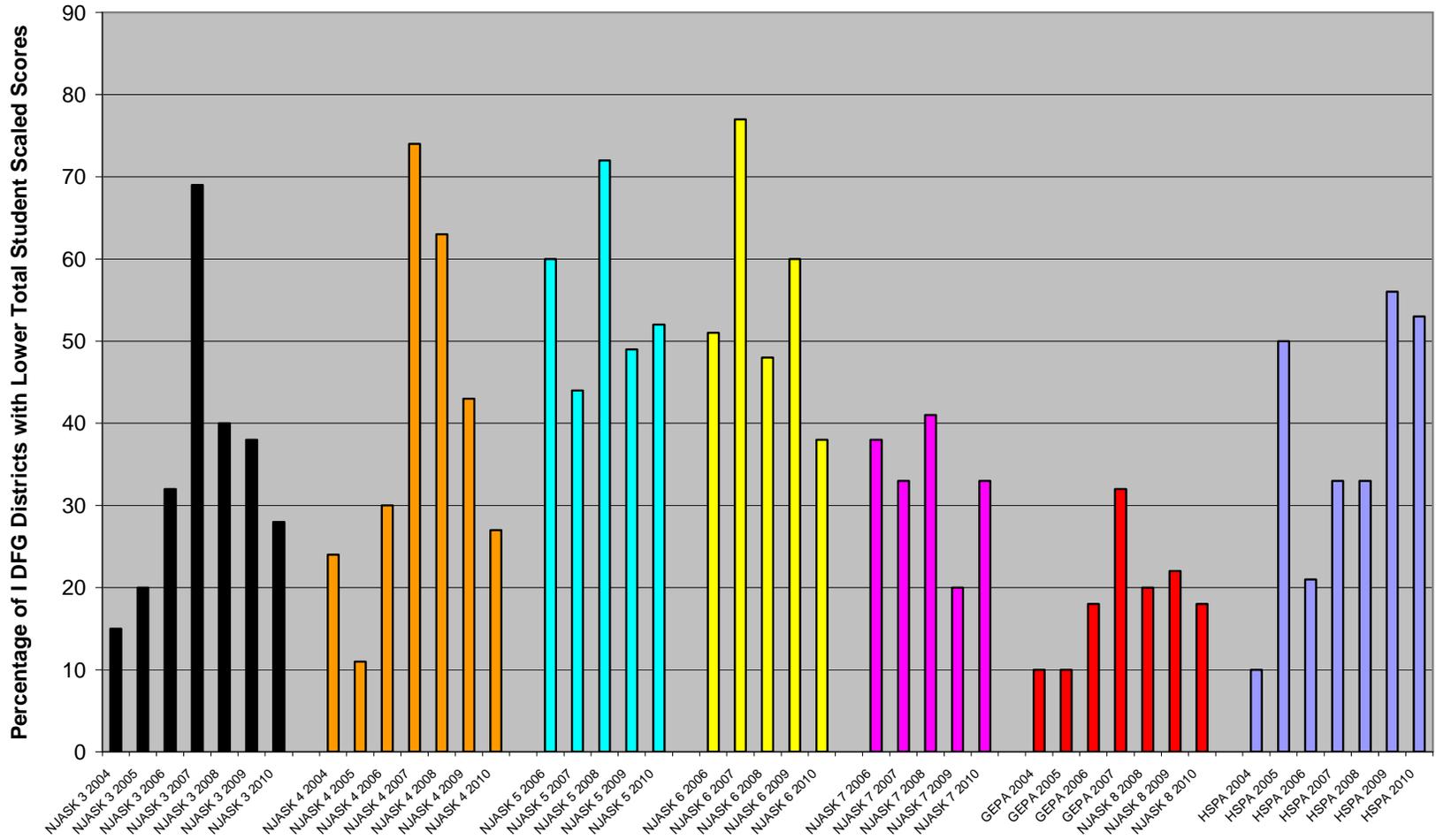
Math achievement above the 50%ile is seen sporadically in grades 5, 6, and 11, rarely in grades 3 and 4. Math achievement above the 50%ile has not been found in grades 7 and 8.

The most consistent achievement pattern is found in grade 8 science where the percentile ranking (with the exception of 2005) is at the 30%ile. A ranking above the 50%ile has not been achieved in grade 4 between the years of 2004-2010.

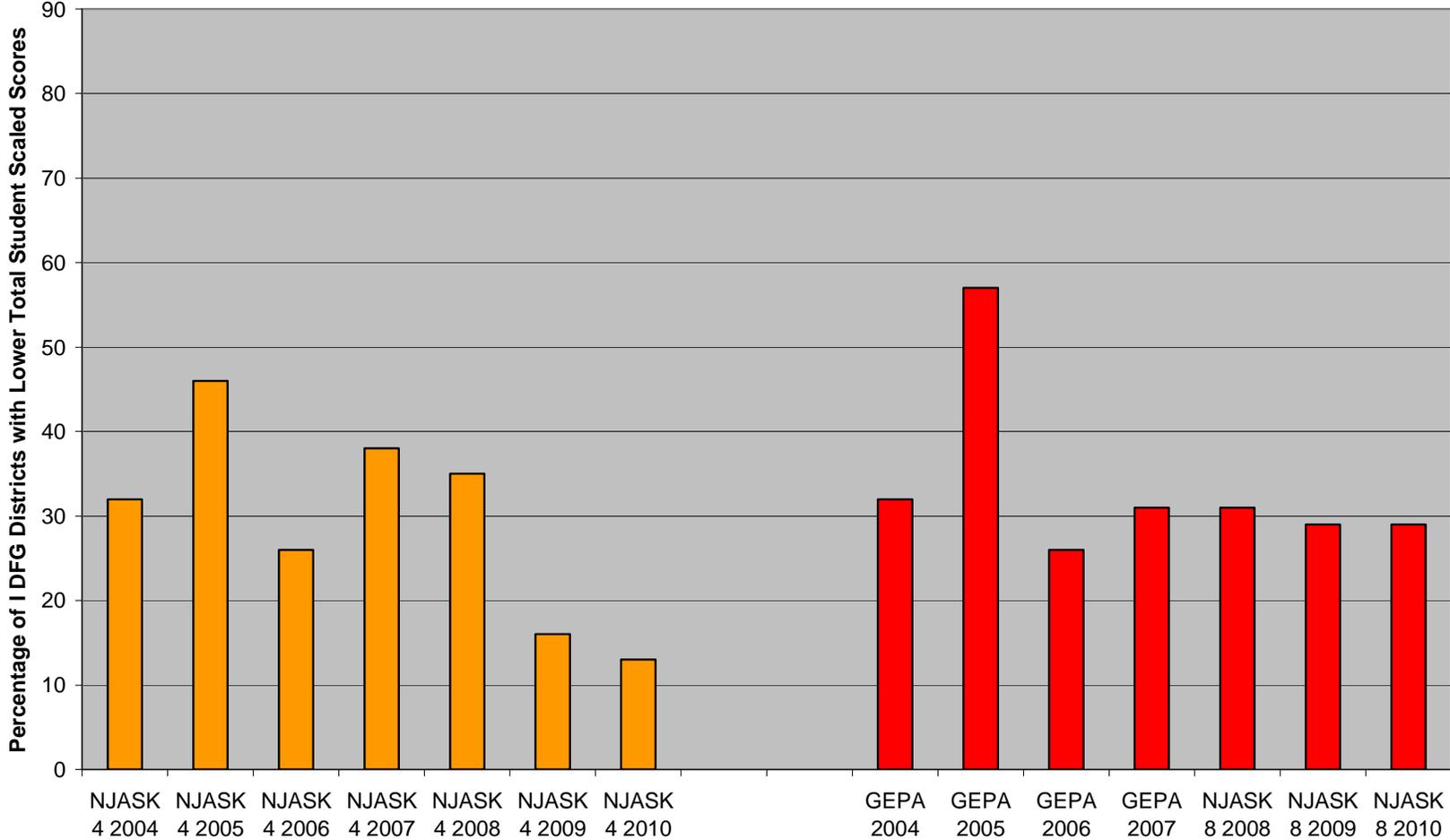
**2004-2010 Language Arts State Testing Grade Level Results  
Chart 4**



2004-2010 Mathematics State Testing Grade Level Results  
Chart 5



**2004-2010 Science State Testing Grade Level Results  
Chart 6**



## **Hillsborough Cohort Analysis for Language Arts Literacy and Mathematics (Charts 7 and 8)**

### **Methodology**

The methodology for finding the percentile rankings relative to other “I” DFG districts is the same for the previous three charts. Charts 7 and 8, however, allow the reader to follow the same group of students (cohort) as the group moves from one grade to the next. The purpose of examining these charts is to find patterns of grade level effects on student achievement.

The first cohort, Cohort Grd. 3 2004, is the group of children who attended third grade in 2004. The first bar shaded black is that cohort’s third grade results. The following bar shaded orange is the same group of children’s fourth grade results in 2005. The third bar, shaded blue, is the same group who attended fifth grade in 2006, and so on.

The second cohort, Cohort Grd. 3 2005, is a different group of students from the first cohort. They attended third grade in 2005. The third cohort, Cohort Grd. 3 2006, attended third grade in 2006.

Each bar is shaded to represent a different grade as follows:

Grade 3	Black
Grade 4	Orange
Grade 5	Blue
Grade 6	Yellow
Grade 7	Pink
Grade 8	Red

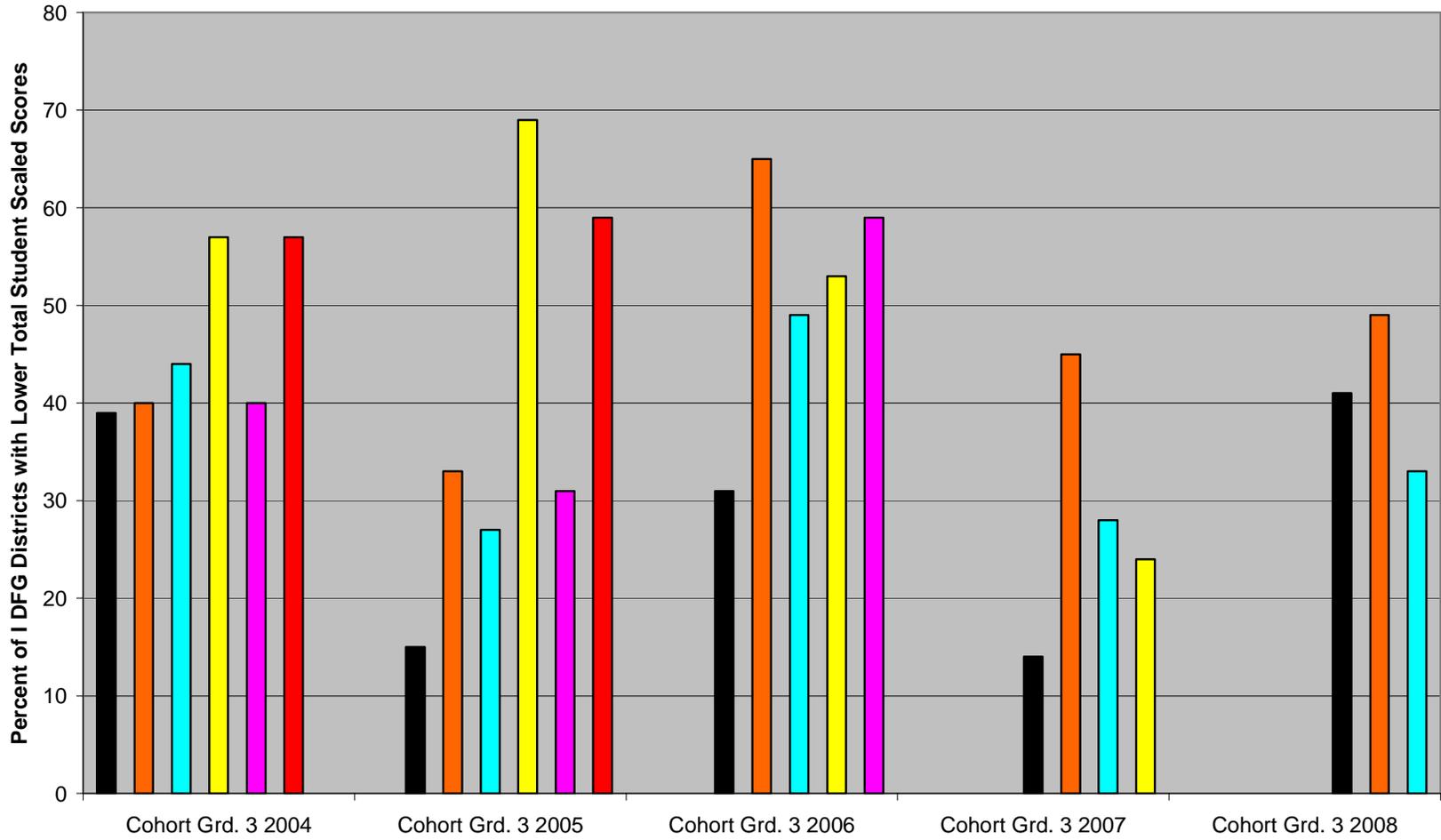
### **Observations**

When examining language arts literacy performance, the first and last cohorts seem to show the most stable multiyear performance with the second cohort being the least stable. The third cohort is relatively strong showing most years either at or above the 50%ile seen among other districts in the DFG. The fourth cohort is relatively weak with average language arts performance below the 30%ile.

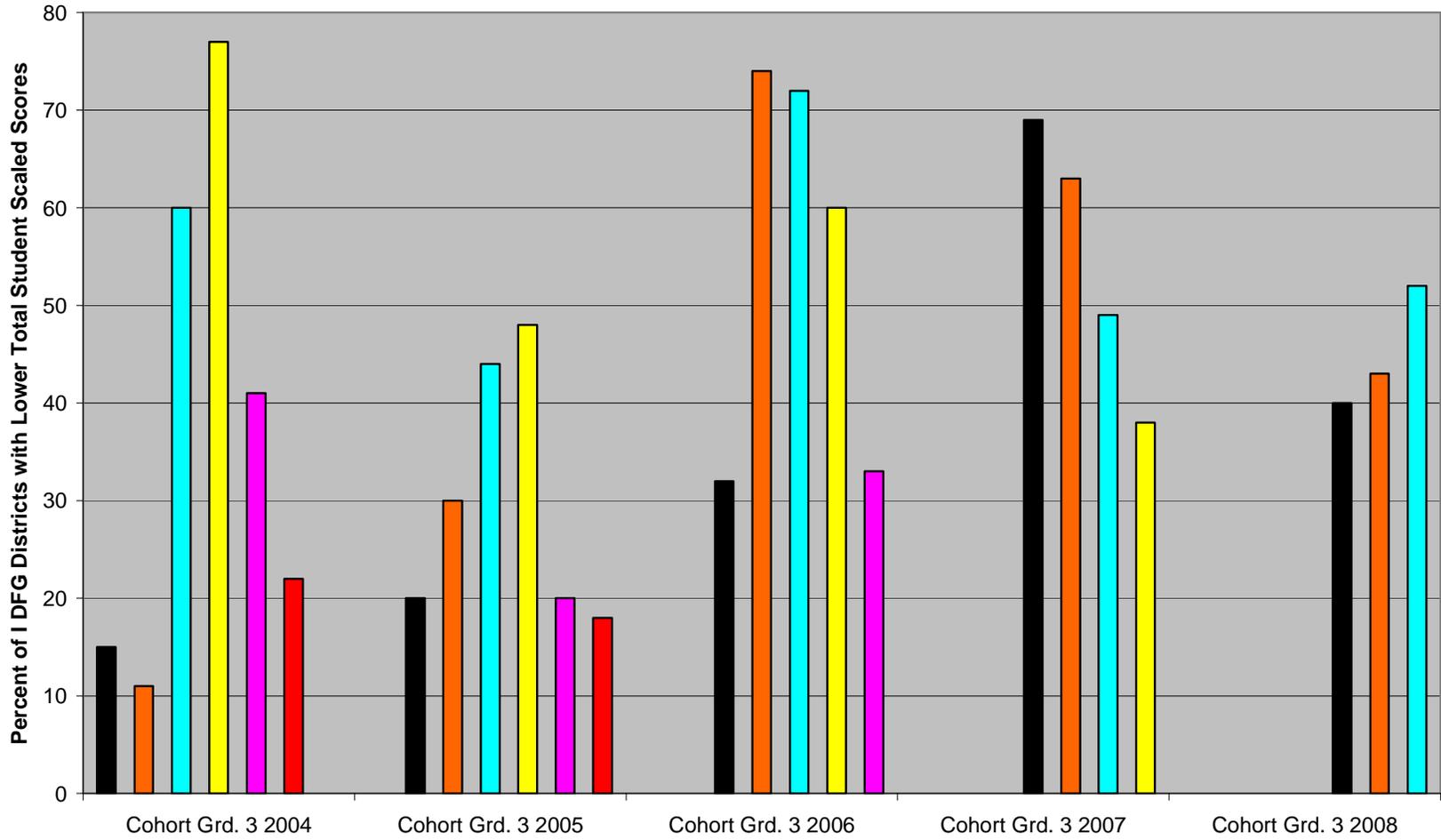
With the exception of the last cohort, the first four cohorts show decreasing relative mathematics performance. With the noted exception of the fourth cohort, grades 5 and 6 are relatively strong grades for each cohort.

Inconsistent performance as the same group of students move through the grades is found in both charts 7 and 8.

Hillsborough Cohort Analysis: Language Arts  
Chart 7



Hillsborough Cohort Analysis: Mathematics  
Chart 8



## **Generalizations**

Hillsborough Township Public School's relative performance compared to all districts in the state, as well as compared to districts in the same District Factor Group perform as anticipated with some exceptions of performing above what one would predict. Given the percent of children receiving free and reduced lunch (6.54%), as well as the percent of children who are learning the English as a second language (1.88%), one would predict that we would perform below the 50%ile in the DFG. Our performance is not always below the DFG average and this performance should be recognized as above predicted.

It would be an appropriate and challenging goal for the district to perform above the 50%ile of the DFG across all grade levels and all tested subjects. We would need to avoid watering down our curriculum and avoid focusing on test preparation activities, but examine content, pacing, assessment, instructional strategies, and technology to ensure the richness of the curriculum while diagnosing weaknesses and supporting teachers and students in the process.

## **Section 1.2: Technology**

We live in very exciting times where the power to receive and transmit any form of digital information is captured in devices that fit in the palm of our hands. Our district has recognized that technology can play a powerful role in enhancing the learning experience for our students. The district has invested in wireless technology in all of our facilities. We are also using virtual desktops where any computer can mirror a secure desktop that has all of the software that we provide to our students and faculty. Although we have taken many important steps forward as a district, I suggest that we proceed with a greater resolve and resources to begin catching up to where other districts are who also recognize the value of technology in the classroom.

- Install in each classroom throughout the district the ability for students to see and hear any digital image or sound the teacher wishes to use during classroom instruction
- Develop a plan to effectively integrate technology into instructional practice, including clear expectations for how technology is to be used in the classroom
- Provide all teachers with portable computer devices within the next four years
- Provide staff development for certificated and non-certificated staff to ensure adequate understanding of the software and hardware used throughout the district and clearly communicate the expectations for the effective use of technology for both educational and administrative purposes

Some board members who I interviewed as part of the Transition Plan expressed an interest in being more innovative as a district. Educating students is a highly complex task. A single lesson, presented by the same teacher can, and usually does, have a very different effect on individual students in the classroom. Some children learn quickly, others need additional help. Learning styles research teaches us that our students have a particular proclivity to learn a specific way. Matching the learning style with the

teaching methodology is as much of an art as it is a science. We must allow teachers to explore new and innovative ways of addressing learning styles and meeting students' individual needs. Creating a culture that values teachers' interests to research and their capabilities to develop new and exciting programs for their students will be professionally stimulating and invigorating for our organization.

- Fund an “Innovative Practice” mini-grant program to encourage our professional staff to innovate and take risks using emerging technologies to enhance and enrich learning in compelling ways

Students do not always learn best at the time that we choose to teach them. Typically, teachers teach during the scheduled instructional period, Calculus CP 7:30 am to 8:15 am for example. The technology is available now so that students can access the information at a time that is convenient for them and they can also supplement the morning Calculus lesson with digital lessons presented by other teachers at no additional cost. This added learning opportunity that is provided outside of the scheduled instructional period is termed “asynchronous learning.”

- Explore strategies for asynchronous learning opportunities for students to engage in learning activities outside the regular classroom period

Another advantage of technology that must be leveraged in the classroom is its ability to connect people with like interests from around the world. An important function of public education is preparing our students to be successful in a world that is becoming increasingly more globalized and interconnected. Learning about different cultures and sensitizing our students to the needs of others around the world is typically done by reading a textbook. We need to use technology to open our lessons and our minds by connecting to other cultures and collaborating on international projects that enrich and enhance our curriculum and provide our students with new and exciting experiences with children from other parts of the world.

- Globalize the curriculum by allowing teachers the opportunity to collaborate with educators from around the world, making real-time contact through video conferencing a common practice

One-to-one computing is the natural progression as digital devices become more ubiquitous in classroom environments. Other districts have instituted one-to-one initiatives with great success and have demonstrated improved student performance. Financing such a significant initiative will be an important part of the discussion. The conversation should begin in earnest shortly.

- Explore the possibility of providing one-to-one computers for all of students in grades 5 through 12 within the next five years
  - Using value added e-textbooks as the primary text for instruction, rather than paper text

- Becoming more digitally proficient and less reliant on paper and pencil tasks

### **Section 1.3: Staff Development**

Developing one's staff is the cornerstone of an effective organization. We are educating the children of our community and more than 75% of our operating expenses are in human capital. We must invest significant resources and time to maintain and build upon existing skill sets if we are to recognize our district's potential. Research in the field of staff development informs us that effective professional development programs are job embedded, relevant, and change behavior using supportive means, rather than coercive means. Such programs have a greater likelihood of producing the desired outcome.

- Commit to a teacher-training-teachers model of staff development and provide the necessary resources and release time to provide high quality, job embedded, differentiated staff development for the teachers aligned directly to district and school/department goals
- Provide consistent staff development opportunities for school and district administrators that is uniquely designed to the challenges of educational leadership

Professional Learning Communities (PLC) are groups of educators who gather periodically to examine evidence of students' learning and discuss methods to improve learning outcomes. Administration, teachers, and the board have recognized the value of PLCs and have scheduled two PLC meetings per month as part of the collective bargaining agreement. The district is making a considerable investment in PLCs by sending all members of the Leadership Team to participate in three days of training at a national PLC training center during the summer.

- Utilize Professional Learning Communities (PLC) to engage in professional discussions involving evidence of student learning, and provide a venue for collaboration and collegial decision-making regarding matters important to student learning and professional development

### **Section 1.4: Programs**

There are two program modifications that rise to the level of a significant priority for the district. The Core Curriculum Content Standards require that all schools have a comprehensive world language program beginning at the elementary school level. As a result of significant reductions in state aid, the elementary world language program was eliminated. Although we are currently out of compliance, we should take this opportunity to reexamine the elementary world language program and align a new program with the best practices in the field. We should also examine if Spanish should be the language of choice or another language, such as Chinese, would be

better suited as an introductory language. These decisions are best discussed and debated by those with expertise in the field.

The second program that needs to be addressed in the near future is to incorporate a project-based program that is focused on integrating the disciplines of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Our national leaders are calling on local educators to better prepare the students for advanced study and career opportunities in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. We have a world-class model within our district that may be used as a curricular model: the RoboRaiders. The RoboRaiders is an extra-curricular club where students work collaboratively to design, build, and control a robot that is required to complete particular tasks. I am impressed by the quality of this program and would like to develop a program that is part of the curriculum, so that every student in Hillsborough has the opportunity to experience such a wonderful program.

- Institute a world language program at the elementary schools
- Implement Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) program for all students at the middle level, modeled after the RoboRaiders high school club

## **Chapter 2: Operations**

### **Section 2.1: Finance**

One of the most significant challenges facing New Jersey public schools is to find an answer to the following question, “How does a district adequately fund programs when the levy cannot increase beyond 2% while costs outside of the district’s control exceed 2%?” The answers are not easy, and require some creative thinking. I proposed during my budget presentation that we begin thinking like entrepreneurs, and look for opportunities to generate revenue including tuition-based full-day kindergarten, childcare, and adult school. We have begun this process with the Children at Play (CAP) program, but the commitment needs to be strategic and long-term, in order to build our client base, increase market-share, and generate the type of revenue that can support other programs within our budget. We should redouble our effort to bring in grant monies to fund or offset the costs of various projects.

- Maintain a budget within the 2% levy cap that meets the educational needs for the students of Hillsborough Township
- Take advantage of federal, state, and local grant opportunities
- Investigate and implement, when applicable, revenue generating activities that are aligned with the district’s mission

Of great interest to me and many members of our community is for our district to become a “greener” district and take better advantage of the cost savings while being more environmentally sensitive. The Green Initiatives are discussed in greater detail later in this report, however, the savings may be significant. I would like the board to agree that for every dollar saved by being greener, 50 cents will be returned to the taxpayer in the form of property tax relief. The remaining 50 cents would be used to fund innovative practices throughout the district. We realize that the property tax burden is significant in New Jersey, and this would be our way of giving back to the taxpayers while also funding innovative activities to help address the needs of our students.

- Utilize 50% of the savings from Green Initiatives (see below) to fund innovative practices as discussed in the Technology section below and the other 50% to support property tax relief

Over a year ago, the district made an investment in purchasing a new financial software system. Our purchasing, payroll, personnel, accounting, and reporting are all handled through the new system, Systems 3000. We have yet to include the full budgeting module into our practices. During the 2011-2012 school year all budget managers will use the new module to submit their budgets. The module allows for multiple scenarios to be tracked and discussed as each level of the organization reviews and makes changes to budget. This will be a highly valuable tool for the administration, as well as the board as we develop future budgets.

- Fully implement Systems 3000 for all budget development processes

## **Section 2.2: Facilities**

The funding for maintenance and upkeep of our facilities has been a low priority. When faced with difficult decisions concerning reductions to the budget, programs for students have trumped investments in our facilities. Those are the right priorities, but we need to smartly plan to do both and neglect neither. The administration has a comprehensive list of facility needs which must be prioritized and shared with the board and public. A renewed focus on preventative maintenance and keeping the interior routinely painted and well maintained should be the focus of every member of the buildings and grounds department. Our facilities are clean, but during my inspections of the schools I observed many stained ceiling tiles, broken ceramic tiles, and classrooms that have not received a fresh coat of paint in far too many years. I wish to emphasize the importance of providing the resources to address these needs. The maintenance and custodial staff stand ready to complete this work in a timely way, if funded. School beautification can be done at little cost and in collaboration with the Home/School Associations (HSAs). Each HSA is a very supportive organization, and I believe that they would assist us in this endeavor. Many already plant flowers and assist the principal to beautify the school.

- Implement the facilities plan to repair/maintain all capital structures within the next five years
- Develop a comprehensive preventative maintenance plan
- Establish a clearly articulated priority ordered listing of capital and maintenance projects that will be funded and completed over the next five years
- Implement a painting schedule to have all rooms and hallways receive a fresh coat of paint every five years
- Collaborate with the HSAs to support beautification projects throughout the district

Although we have successfully reduced our energy costs over a period of time in three of our schools, there is a significant gap between what energy savings could be realized and where we are today. Additional savings will be realized by utilizing Energy for America for the balance of our facilities. This company remotely controls our heating and cooling systems to maximize savings and monitor our HVAC equipment. We also need to do a better job conserving energy. This can be accomplished by focusing on simple behavioral changes (turning off lights and computers when not in use). Neighboring districts that have focused on behavioral changes have seen significant energy savings, and we need to do the same. We also need to take advantage of the many programs and grant opportunities to encourage public schools to use renewable energy sources. These actions will not only save a great deal of taxpayer's money, but also reinforce with our students and community the importance of being environmentally friendly.

- Establish a variety of Green Initiatives (Environmentally Sound Practices) including:

- Evaluate all energy consumption by benchmarking at all facilities and compare energy savings annually by building
- Expand heating/cooling control systems to the schools not under Energy for America's supervision
- Institute behavioral change practices district-wide to promote energy savings
- Complete comprehensive energy audit for all district facilities
- Implement a Power Purchase Agreement to allow solar panel use on the school roofs allowing the district to reduce its electric costs and replace roofs (and possibly install air-conditioning) without additional costs to the taxpayers

### **Section 2.3: Governance**

As a result of my observation and participation in many board and committee meetings during the past few months, I am recommending that the board consider modifying its committee structure to ensure the efficient use of board members' and administration's time. Another purpose of changing the committee structure is to focus the board's work on the oversight of the Strategic Plan. I have heard from some board members that they would like to have minutes generated in a timely manner from each of the committees. I agree and would also recommend the publishing of these minutes on the website for the public's ability to stay well informed of the board's decision-making process. The recommendations listed below allow the administration to provide the depth of support and analysis in a timely manner. Under this proposal, all board members would be privy to all committee agendas and backup materials prior to the committee meeting, so that all board members feel well informed and advised prior to voting on an agenda item at a regularly scheduled board meeting. My suggestion is to consolidate the existing eight committees into three: Education, Operations, and Human Resources. I also suggest that the revised Strategic Plan base itself on these three main categories, as I have structured this report using these three areas as the chapters which all areas are built upon. Below I have outlined which committee would be responsible for a particular district function. I am also suggesting that we have two board action meetings per month and eliminate the work session. Our district is too large and complex to have only one action meeting per month. Personnel appointments, contract approvals, and payroll adjustments need to be made in a more timely manner than only once a month. I have outlined below the specifics of my proposal for your consideration. I request that the board implement the recommendations listed below during the first half of the school year with a review by the full board in December to determine if the board should return to current practices, adopt my recommendations permanently, or adopt modification to my recommendations. We will discuss these recommendations in greater detail during the board retreat.

- Schedule two regular board action meetings per month (preferably the first and third Thursday of the month)

- Eliminate work session meetings and replace with clearly documented minutes of committee meetings including recommended action items published on the website for board member review and public viewing
- Consolidate current committee structure to the three following committees:
  - Education (Asst. Supt. for Curriculum, Administrative Liaison)
    - Student achievement
    - Curriculum, programs, courses of study
    - Instructional practices
    - Technology
    - Master scheduling
    - Special education
    - Professional Development
    - Communications Plan related to Education
    - Policy development related to Education
    - Strategic Plan implementation oversight related to Education
    - All matters involving the education of the students
  - Operations (Business Administrator, Administrative Liaison)
    - Finance
    - Facilities
    - Governance
    - Transportation
    - Environmentally friendly practices (Green initiatives)
    - Non-educational professional services
    - Safety
    - Communications Plan related to Operations
    - Policy development related to Operations
    - Strategic Plan implementation oversight related to Operations
    - Other non-educational issues
  - Human Resources (Asst. Supt. for Personnel, Administrative Liaison)
    - Teacher evaluation
    - Administrator evaluation
    - Support staff evaluation
    - Employee discipline
    - Tenure recommendations
    - Negotiations
    - Contract negotiations
    - Grievance handling
    - Communications Plan related to Human Resources
    - Policy development related to Human Resources
    - Strategic Plan implementation oversight related to Human Resources
    - Any additional matters involving the employees of the district
- All board members will be full members of one of the three standing committees.
  - Vice president of the board will be a full member of two committees.
  - President will serve on all three committees.

- Board members can request to be alternates for other committees.
- The administration will draft all committee meeting minutes for the committees' approvals
  - All committee minutes will include:
    - Date, time, attendance, and summary of agenda item discussions
    - Clearly defined action of the committee including:
      - Work assigned to administration
      - Recommendations to the full board for action or discussion or both
    - Action items carried over from prior meetings
    - Action items modified from prior meetings
    - Action items completed from prior meetings
    - Dates of all upcoming meetings for the year (to be scheduled a full year in advance)
  - Administrative liaison will provide the committee chair a draft agenda with backup no later than nine days prior to meeting date for review and approval
  - Administrative liaison will transmit to the full board the agenda and all backup no later than one full week prior to the meeting
  - Administrative liaison will provide the committee members a draft of the minutes no later than one week after the meeting for review and comments
  - The Administrative liaison will provide the full board the minutes as backup to the second board meeting of the month. In order to ensure timely reporting of the committee minutes after appropriate review. All committee meetings should take place prior to the first board meeting of the month, so proper reporting can occur at the second meeting of the month
- At the end of the school year, each committee will provide a listing of all action items completed for the year, thereby clearly documenting the work completed by each committee for the board and public
- All meeting minutes, with appropriate redactions as required by law, will be posted on the website for reviewing with ease and increasing transparency

## **Chapter 3: Human Resources**

### **Section 3.1: Personnel**

The importance of the human resource function within a school district cannot be overstated. Attracting the best and brightest, developing their skills, celebrating their accomplishments, and improving their professional practices are cornerstones of successful school systems. I have been very impressed with the quality of the educators who work in our school system. Their instructional skills are well honed and their belief in their students' success is genuine.

The Department of Education (DOE) has focused on reforming the teacher evaluation model which will be in effect for the 2012-2013 school year. It fundamentally alters the focus of teacher evaluation from traditionally observing classroom instruction to including student learning outcomes, specifically academic growth on state-wide achievement tests in language arts and mathematics.

I support using growth models to evaluate teacher performance; however, the devil is in the details. Finding reliable and valid measures of students' learning that are broadly accepted by educators and parents will be a focus area as discussed in the Education chapter of this report. These will be multiple measures, both summative and formative in nature, and used as much for its diagnostic as its evaluative efficacy. We will need to marry our work on finding effective measures of students' learning with a revised teacher and principal evaluation system. The two recommendations listed below will be two of the most important initiatives that the district and the State of New Jersey will engage in the upcoming school year.

- Revise the Teacher Evaluation document to reflect current best practices in teacher evaluation and comply with anticipated changes from the DOE
- Revise the Principal Evaluation document to reflect current best practices in school leader evaluation and comply with anticipated changes from the DOE

Our support staff needs additional professional development to hone their skills and utilize technology to make their work more efficient and effective. All too often our support staff is overlooked when it comes to professional development dollars and planning. We would be remiss and would function less efficiently, if we fail to attend to their needs.

- Institute a support staff professional development program, so that secretaries and clerical assistants can develop and hone their skills

As mentioned above, we are considering a teacher-training-teachers model of staff development where teachers identified as experts in their field would be responsible for training their colleagues in best instructional practices. In order to facilitate this process we must develop a system to train the trainers well. I am recommending the creation of a Teacher Leadership Institute where teachers can develop their leadership skills and

prepare to become our teacher trainers, or possibly future administrators in the district. Developing the talent within our district allows us to closely mentor individuals who may eventually become leaders in our district.

- Institute a Teacher Leadership Institute for the purpose of developing the future leaders of our schools

### **Next Steps: The Strategic Planning Process**

During the summer the board will have a retreat for the purpose of reviewing the recommendations made in this report and discussing revisions to the district's Strategic Plan.

Once the board adopts a revised Strategic Plan the administrative team will develop action plans for each goal and strategy listed in the plan. The board will review the action plans and the board committees charged with oversight for each goal area will also review the action plan and make modifications, if necessary. The implementation of the action plans will commence in the fall of 2012.

As mentioned at the beginning of this document, the 100 Day Report is meant as a starting point for discussion, not an end point. The recommendations listed above are meant to simulate conversation and debate. This report is not intended to stifle analyses that may be different than my own. I encourage open debate and hope that this report will add value to our district.