

**MINUTES OF THE PATERSON BOARD OF EDUCATION  
BOARD RETREAT**

October 4, 2012 – 6:35 p.m.  
Administrative Offices

Presiding: Comm. Christopher Irving, President

Present:

Dr. Donnie Evans, State District Superintendent  
Ms. Robynn Meehan, Field Service Representative, New Jersey School Boards Association

Comm. Chrystal Cleaves  
Comm. Wendy Guzman  
Comm. Jonathan Hodges

Comm. Manuel Martinez  
Comm. Alex Mendez

Absent:

Comm. Errol Kerr  
Comm. Kenneth Simmons, Vice President

Comm. Corey Teague

The Salute to the Flag was led by Comm. Irving.

Comm. Irving read the Open Public Meetings Act:

The New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act was enacted to insure the right of the public to have advance notice of, and to attend the meetings of the Paterson Public School District, as well as other public bodies at which any business affecting the interest of the public is discussed or acted upon.

In accordance with the provisions of this law, the Paterson Public School District has caused notice of this meeting:

**Board Retreat  
October 4, 2012 at 6:30 p.m.  
Administrative Offices  
90 Delaware Avenue  
Paterson, New Jersey**

to be published by having the date, time and place posted in the office of the City Clerk of the City of Paterson, at the entrance of the Paterson Public School offices, on the district's website, and by sending notice of the meeting to the Arab Voice, El Diario, the Italian Voice, the North Jersey Herald & News, and The Record.

Comm. Irving: I'd like to thank you all for coming tonight. This evening we are going to discuss Board specific goals. We have Robynn Meehan who is with the New Jersey School Boards Association. We will probably see her in a few weeks at the conference that's coming up, but the purpose and goal of this is we do it every year. The Board is charged with the responsibility to come up with goals that we can work towards and shoot towards during the course of the year. The only piece I will add before Dr. Evans talks about district goals and Robynn comes up is the fact that I'm a firm believer of

goals being specific, measurable and attainable. So what can we do? What can we get done this year in the current structure that we have? What mechanisms do we have, especially within committee, in order to achieve these respective goals? With that said, Dr. Evans?

## **SUPERINTENDENT'S INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**

### **Academic Targets**

Dr. Evans: As you know, three years ago we developed a very comprehensive strategic plan, the plan that we refer to as Bright Futures. That is driven by four priorities, as everyone hopefully recalls, and you have multiple copies of that. I'm sure you've committed them to memory as I have. Chief among those four priorities is the Effective Academic Programs. We want to make sure that our academic programs are researched-based and outcomes-driven, and there are a number of goals associated with that particular priority. Our second priority is Safe, Caring, and Orderly Schools. We want our schools to be safe so our students can give their full attention to learning and teachers can give their full attention to teaching. Third is Family and Community Engagement, an area that we all agree we need to continue to work on to get our parents and our families and the larger community more directly involved in the education of Paterson youth. Then fourth has to do with primarily the district office to have more Efficient and Responsive District Operations. That is the specific reference in the strategic plan. We want to be more responsive to our internal and external constituents. We want to be more user-friendly, more accessible, and make sure obviously that as we are engaging our internal and external constituents that we're doing it in a way that meets their needs as well. Within that context are 23 goals and we've gone over and over them. The goals that the Board has focused more specifically on have been embedded within those 23 goals and those four priorities. The Board has agreed among itself to identify the top four or five that the Board would adopt. For each we identified specific measures that may or may not have already been discussed in a different context and then we would report you the outcome of our work as it relates to the achievement of those goals. Consistent with the pattern that we've established, and I think it's a good approach that we've taken, you have in front of you attached to your agenda the goals for 2011-2012. You have the targets that were determined as it relates to each one of those goals, and you have then our actual performance reflecting outcomes from the previous year. Goal I is to close the achievement gap and increase student achievement for all students. We had a number of objectives and strategies aligned with that particular goal, but the primary measure was academic outcomes and you see how we progressed on each one. We established the targets that you see in the project category based on performance in the previous year. The 2010-2011 performance isn't there, but we established as targets, for example, for English language arts literacy 34.5% proficiency. I think the previous year's performance was 30.8% or 30.9% and we met that target. As you look at each one of the goals and the targets you can see where we met it and where we didn't. We actually met most of our academic targets because the full array of our academic targets for the district went beyond this. But you see where we met it and where we didn't, which has clear implications for our discussion tonight and identification of additional goals. Then for each one of the subsequent goals and strategies you see similar information. There are some areas that have question marks and that's because we don't have all of the data for those. For the SAT in particular the data that we have has been questioned. It was questioned last year in terms of whether or not it was accurate in terms of all of the populations we wanted to represent and the College Board indicated to us that they were refiguring it. We are expecting the more recent data this week, the 4<sup>th</sup> or the 5<sup>th</sup>. Today was the 4<sup>th</sup> and we didn't get it, so I'm hoping

that we get it tomorrow and we can fill in those question marks. Similarly with the culture index we administered a culture survey across our district last spring to all our teachers, students, non-instructional staff, and a percent of parents in each school. That information is being calculated as we speak. What that does is tell us more or less where we are in having a healthy school culture in each one of our schools and then for the district. Our goal was 3.5. The scale that is being used here is a 1 to 5 scale and our target in our first iteration of this was to reach 3.5 with intent to increase that over the years. Very soon we will have that and then I can fill that question mark in. You see the other data there. I think it speaks for itself in terms of goals. You also have attached to that my suggestion for your consideration, the identification of goals for 2012-2013, which is the task at hand. As I've done in the past, I've offered recommended goals and then the Board would decide you've accepted some, not accepted some, modified, and that's the task, to determine what goals the Board wants to adopt as Board and overall district goals, particularly in the context of Bright Futures. Then we can move ahead. Actually, we're already moving ahead to implement the strategic plan and the only thing that I've asked is that we be consistent with the efforts that are outlined in the strategic plan in identifying those goals. I think we've captured just about everything. In fact, I think there was one instance a year ago where you identified a goal that was not there and we subsequently added that goal to the strategic plan so we could maintain alignment. So that's where we are and you have my recommendation. Of course, the process for getting there driven by the School Boards Association is the same in helping us to look at our needs, engage in discussion among ourselves, and ultimately make some decisions as to what those goals are going to be. That concludes my comments.

Comm. Irving: Thank you, Dr. Evans. I'm now going to invite Robynn Meehan up. Robynn can at least talk to the Board about her experience with New Jersey School Boards, and then you can kind of navigate us through this process.

## **BOARD GOAL SETTING WORKSHOP**

Ms. Robynn Meehan: Good evening everyone. I usually don't use a microphone because I have four kids and I'm really loud. My name is Robynn Meehan and I'm your Field Service Representative from School Boards. I've been working for School Boards for about eight months now. This is all we've been doing for the past few months, goal-setting with every district. I have 77 districts. I have all of Passaic, Sussex, and Warren. Everybody of course has Board meetings in Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday nights usually so I try to fit everyone in. This really is a wonderful job because I'm working for you who work for the kids and there's really nothing better than that. I came from a background of nursing, but I did 13 years on my Board, nine years as a Board President. Then this opportunity came up and I thought I have 13 years of experience on the Board, I know a little, but working for School Boards all of a sudden those 13 years it's like, I didn't know enough. All of a sudden I have all this information coming at me and it's just wonderful. Now I can give it back to you guys and that's what I'm here for. So we're going to do some goal-setting. I did bring your Board self-evaluation so we can go over that. That's about it. I have this really kind of cool thing that I like to do with all the Boards because I want you to take a few moments to celebrate your successes. You really have done a wonderful job. I have to tell you my husband graduated from Elmwood Park. It was East Paterson when he went there, but I'm from way up in the boonies with the bears up there in Sussex County. But he grew up here and as a matter of fact he kept saying he wanted to come with me and I said no, you can't. I want to cover dates to remember. The first date coming up is workshop for School Boards, which is October 23-25. I think most of you are coming. I'm so excited because I want to see everybody down there. There are some really good

action labs and good training. For me the best part of workshop was always the networking, talking to other Board members from different districts just hearing what everybody is going through. Sometimes it makes you come back and say I don't have it so bad. So it really enlightens you a little bit. Also, November 14 is the regional meeting at Northern Highlands High School. I believe that's in Allendale. Don't quote me, but I think it is. December 5 is the Passaic County Meet-up. One thing I just want to tell you is that School Boards is trying to reenact some meetings. We're trying to get back to basics and reach out to all Board members because some Board members are saying they want training online and some are saying they don't. So I think School Boards is making a real good step towards accommodating everyone. We're having county meetings which we had the Passaic/Bergen County meeting two weeks ago and those are regular meetings and we're going to have speakers at those meetings. There will be information that you need to know on tenure reform and things like that. Those will be your regular county meetings. Then we're going to have county meet-ups, which the one on December 5 will be. Those are actually going to be kind of like the good old days. I don't know if any of you remember this. I'm older than most of you. There are going to be breakout groups. There are going to be four different topics at each meeting and you can hit four topics and different things that you want to learn about. And you'll be networking with other Board members, which I think is wonderful. That's probably my favorite one. Then the next one that we're going to do is the regional meetings and these will be for academy programs. They'll be worth more credits or if it's something that you need to have mandatory and things like that. Those will be the regional meetings. They'll be just as interesting, but I really like the meet-ups. Anyway, I want to let you know that's what School Boards have in mind. That's what we're heading towards. We also have Marie Bilik, our Director, retiring. I think you've all known that. We have a new Director they've hired, Dr. Larry Feinsod. I love him. I think he's wonderful. He's the Executive County Superintendent in Essex. He'll be joining us as our Executive Director. Does anybody have any questions? Let's review the Board self-evaluation. Let me give you each your copies. I'm sure someone did graphs for you last year. The first graph is a chart and it plots how the Board feels about the nine areas - planning, policy, student achievement, finance, operations, performance, the relationship between CSA, the relationship between you and staff, and the relationship between you and the community. How do you rate those nine areas? It plots it against how well you feel you're doing in those areas. I have to tell you there really isn't a huge gap in any of them. It looks like you guys are really doing a nice job and this truly was a really good self-evaluation. The second chart actually plots how the Board feels they're doing against how you think you're doing individually. So if you go to the first page of your self-evaluation, that's really just the value part, how you value each of those areas. Page two is planning. Again, these were really all good. What I do is I draw a line between good and adequate. If the majority of those numbers fall on the right where it's adequate or unsatisfactory, that's something that you need to take a look at. If the majority falls on the left-hand side with commendable and good, that really isn't anything that you need to look at. The only thing that can really be done is just a tiny bit of tweaking. You guys are doing a wonderful job. Again, this is from last year. Do you have new members this year? Good. So basically this is just from last year. Having said that, you have new members, you're going into a new year, and it's just a little bit of tweaking. Other than that, this was a really good evaluation and I've done quite a few that have not been good. This is really good. Some of the comments on here obviously I can't do much about. I can't help you too much. It's kind of a position. But some of the comments were absolutely wonderful - a remarkable job in helping the administration to maintain its focus on improving student achievement through its rigorous oversight of curriculum and instruction. That says a lot right in that sentence. On page three for policy, there are a couple of comments that you're in compliance with your updates on all state-mandated policies, which is wonderful.

Again, the majority all falls within commendable and good so there really isn't anything to say as far as policy goes. You have had your policy manual updated, correct? So that's all up-to-date. Page four is the student achievement part. Again, you rated student achievement 3.8, which is where it should be, just about the top part because that is everybody's goal. Student achievement was right down in commendable and good. You guys were really pretty good. There really weren't too many comments that said adequate at all. The Department of Education is stepping in and it's not only here. It's with a lot of districts actually. Unfortunately, because I don't work for the Department of Education, I can say a lot of these things come down the pike and they're telling us what to do, but they're not funding us either. So we're looking for different avenues for funding all the time. Anyway, I'm not going to get off on a tangent. The Board in conjunction with the Superintendent and his team has made student achievement the top priority of the district and that's what every field service representative wants to hear, because that's where it should be. Page 5 is finance. I have to tell you all our hands are usually tied with finance because we don't have much of a leeway anyway. I see a comment in here, but it said that we're back on track and everything is good. You have a business administrator in place, correct?

Dr. Evans: Interim.

Ms. Meehan: Okay. Keeping on track with the fiscal management of the district, that's wonderful, resulting in positive results. I think that's a wonderful comment. On page 6 under Board Operations, you work as a Board of committees, correct? So this is my funny for the evening because every single Board does this. I've yet to go into one where in the middle everyone gets it right. There are usually one or two people that say the opposite of what you're doing. You have one person that says you're working as a Board of the whole. Every single Board does the same thing. It's almost like a trick question. That was my funny for the evening. You guys are allowed to laugh. Operations are good. Everything is really on target. The comments on the next page were we must maintain constant contact as a Board with the State Superintendent on areas of decision-making and allowing enough time for questions and changes to be asked. That's an amazing statement because I wish every Board would understand that. It doesn't matter if it's a State Superintendent or not. You need to have the courtesy of letting the Superintendent know if there are things that you want him to understand and they need time to get these things together, and time is money. Quality time should be provided for thinking through the State Superintendent's and cabinet team's decisions, procedures, and mandates. Really good comments guys. I have to tell you that. Those are excellent comments. Page 8, Board performance is really all good, which is kind of nice. It's really wonderful to come into a Board that really doesn't need to have their hand slapped. The chairs of our committees are excellent and always prepared. Some of our chairs do research, attend many community meetings, and belong to organizations. Again, I can't tell you how nice that is. It really is. Page 9, the majority is all on the left-hand side. Excellent relationships have developed with the State Superintendent who keeps an open door and open attitude to all Board of Education members. This is something that every Board strives for. The Board and Superintendent continue to enjoy a good working relationship. The Board has committed itself to the mission of the district and therefore has demonstrated the necessary respect and support due to the Superintendent to effectively carry out that mission. Page 11, I really couldn't find much in here to even comment about you. You really did a great job. With the staff relationships you said you have a few personnel responsibilities, but I have to tell you part of me always wonders as Board members we're not really supposed to have such relationships with staff members. You're supposed to have your relationship with the Superintendent and then it goes down from there. But I kind of always wondered why we're filling this out with the staff. If you're

doing negotiations, then that's a whole other ball game. But if you're not, I always wondered why this was in here. It's just my little comment. Page 12, the community aspect of being a Board member is always a fine line that you walk no matter what district you're in, whether you're in a large district or a small district. The community always wants to know what's going on and you as Board members always feel like you want to give them more and sometimes you're restricted. That's hard for the community to understand sometimes. So it's a fine line that you walk and sometimes it really is hard for everyone to understand. I always say that when you become a Board member you get that big "B" on your forehead and no matter where you are, at the grocery store or at Home Depot, you have people coming up to you saying let me talk to you about is. Those are the things you have to understand. You take it through the chain of command and that's all you can really say. I always told everybody I can listen. I just can't talk to you about it. I can listen to you, but I can't tell you what to do and I will not make you promises because I can't do that. Sometimes that gets old really quickly. As a Board we're beginning to use all areas of media to get the public education's message out. This is huge in this day and age because of all the technology that we have. Then on to page 13, which is challenges facing the district, I have to tell you the majority of your comments are all about student achievement, which is really where they should be. They should be there because that's the biggest thing that we're striving for. Parental involvement I saw a lot. You're looking for more parental involvement. That's something that might be a communication issue. We can look for that with goals. That's pretty much it. I have to tell you this was really a very satisfying nice self-evaluation. When I come back next year it's going to be the same, right? Those are for you to keep and hang onto. Whatever you want to do with those is fine. What I really like to do when I'm doing the goals is go over last year's goals just to see. These were your 2011-2012 goals that you chose. I know you've gone over these with your Superintendent, but just so we have it out there to close the achievement gap and increase student achievement for all students. I think what I was just reading through on what you gave us, Dr. Evans, was that in almost every area you did achieve, especially in the HSPA, correct?

Dr. Evans: That was the greatest, yes.

Ms. Meehan: That was wonderful. So I think that you did achieve this goal overall. Then create healthy school cultures. What do you think? Was that attained? Not that it can't always be worked on because it can, but for the past year do you think that you achieved this?

Comm. Irving: I think we worked diligently to figure out how best to ensure that our schools are safe and have cultures of inclusion and respect. I think the anti-bullying law has imposed some pretty rigid measures. We have the anti-bullying coordinator in every school, an anti-bullying specialist, and a district-wide coordinator. So I would say we certainly have worked towards achieving that goal.

Ms. Meehan: That's wonderful. How about improve internal and external communications?

Comm. Irving: That one we seem to struggle with. Would you guys say that?

Comm. Mendez: We still struggle a little bit with that.

Ms. Meehan: You are not the only district. Every district struggles with this. Again, it's just keeping that communication open and in different avenues. I don't know if you guys have addressed it, but I've been to a couple of districts where they've addressed bring

your device to school. Some of these kids are bringing in their electronic devices and some of the schools are allowing this. It's something that school districts are really starting to look into, which is a little frightening. But having said that, with kids having these devices adults are having these devices and sometimes there are different avenues to look into with your communication. That's really what I'm getting at. I don't really have a smart phone so I'm not really up on things. But they do provide me one from School Boards and I really don't know how to use it very well. But they're telling me that you can use these things for all kinds of things. So these might be the external parts that you want to look at and e-mail blasts. They seem to be really huge. A lot of districts are using e-mail blasts. You guys are probably already doing that. Do you have an online system where you have a parent portal? That's huge.

Comm. Irving: We have a website and a Facebook page. I would do a half check on that. I don't want to be presumptuous to say there haven't been situations between the Superintendent's office and the Board where information is not shared in a quick and efficient manner or in the timeframe that we agreed to. And when it comes to working with the community, information going from the district office to the community and vice versa, I think we've identified that as needing some work.

Comm. Mendez: I'm going in the same direction. I do believe that's the part that we have to work hard on when it comes to communication between the district and the community. How are we going to get in contact? I do believe that there is some issue with communication. I don't know what kind of data we have, but I think that we could have better data than we have right now. I see that we use a lot of ConnectEd to get in contact with the parents. I don't know how updated that data is. For me data is everything. It tells you a lot. If you know how to work with that it gives you a lot of information. But when it comes to communication I think that we have the ability to have a very clean and specific data to make sure that we can get in contact with every parent. I do believe we should look into that and if we're not that accurate we should start going back and getting that data as accurate as possible. We need active phone numbers and active e-mails from the parents.

Ms. Meehan: That's the difficult part, keeping up the census stuff when people are changing phone numbers and e-mail addresses and what have you. We even have that issue at School Boards. I have School Board members telling me they're not getting my e-mails. But if you don't keep us updated on the e-mail address change they're not going to get it. So it's a constant battle and I see where you're coming from because it is difficult and people move all time. But now I'm finding that a lot of people don't have home phones anymore. They only have cell phones and sometimes you get a new cell phone number. It's constantly changing so it is an uphill battle. I see that. Do you have a community relations committee?

Comm. Irving: We have a community relations department, but not necessarily a Board subcommittee. We definitely don't have a standing committee that oversees that.

Comm. Cleaves: I think with the changing world that we live in and the changing environment we forget about fundamentals sometimes. We service a community where we have a community within a community of people that many not have these technological things that everyone else has and we forget about that group of people. So we have to go back to basic fundamental communication with them. I think we lose that also and that could be why we don't get the participation with some of the parents. Everybody is not on Facebook. Everyone doesn't have a cell phone.

Ms. Meehan: I had a woman last night that actually said she didn't have a computer so she doesn't get anything via e-mail. It was an older lady, older than me, so it was interesting. She said she had a hard time getting communication that way. A lot of times you do away with paper because everybody is electronic and you may be losing some of that. But the communications department that you have is through the school, correct? Am I understanding that right? Is there someone that works as a liaison or something to the Board?

Dr. Evans: The director for the department is the primary liaison. He works through me and then directly in many cases with Board members.

Comm. Irving: She's talking about communication.

Dr. Evans: I'm sorry. You said community relations, I thought.

Ms. Meehan: It's all kind of related. But the community relations part that I was getting at is sometimes like you have a communications department. So can that person come and give you updates as to what's going on with communications? Sometimes brainstorming that way you may bring that idea up. Somebody is going to say we did away with the paper part of it, but maybe we should go back to that. You're k-12, correct? So some of the younger kids should still be getting a paper in their backpacks, at least you hope so. My youngest is 14 now so I'm thinking I'm not sure. But as a parent I always look forward to that - getting it out of the backpack and we go through everything. That's really huge to keep that going on because of that issue. But the communications department might be able to be that bridge that might be part of the communication gap. So it might be something that if you're willing to just come and give some updates as to what's going on with that and are we looking at different avenues. You guys have the ideas because you're the community coming in saying this is what they're asking for. It might be something to think about as maybe a Board goal or something. Build internal capacity to support school improvement. I had to read this three times because I wasn't sure where you were going with this. Can you tell me?

Dr. Evans: Part of our strategy for improving student achievement is to build capacity among our teachers, make our teachers stronger, our principals stronger, and our district office staff stronger. In doing so then we're building internal capacity to support student achievement. That's what that's about.

Ms. Meehan: So kind of a professional development, if you will?

Dr. Evans: Professional development is part of it.

Comm. Irving: Supporting, reinforcing and strengthening central office personnel, directors, supervisors, and assistant superintendents, so that they can empower the same with our educators.

Ms. Meehan: Meaning the internal part.

Comm. Irving: Yes.

Ms. Meehan: Okay. Do you think that's pretty much been worked on this past year?

Comm. Irving: We've done quite a great deal of work when it comes to internal capacity as far as reorganization that just happened within the district a few months ago. I think



we can certainly say that was achieved. To what degree and level - I think we're going to start to see some of that happen this year.

Ms. Meehan: The follow-through might be now.

Dr. Evans: And if you look at the indicators there are three indicators or specific strategies. Review and revise the performance appraisal system for all district level and school level administrators - that's been done. There's a new performance-based assessment system for all principals and all district office administrators. The practices that are being evaluated changed and data is now a part of everybody's evaluation - student performance data and other data. So that we've done and all administrators are being evaluated this year on those new instruments and the new procedures. Create an accurate data warehouse - that's in process. That's the ALIO system that's being built, starting with our finance data and then we're going to add human resource data and ultimately add student data. That's a three-year process. Then institute an electronic system for School Board agenda. We haven't gotten there yet. That's one that we haven't done and we're ready to go ahead and move forward on that.

Ms. Meehan: Okay. So I think that you've definitely hit all your benchmarks. This is what I like to do. Call it silly, but I love it because I really think that you guys need to celebrate successes. A lot of times this is what needs to go to the public. Tell me what's wonderful here. What's wonderful in Paterson? What's happening here at this school that's wonderful? I know there are wonderful things, so brag to me.

Comm. Martinez: The first thing I think of is the resilience of so many of our students and teachers and administrators. Even though they are faced with great challenges they still stick to it and they are able to achieve great things. So resilience to me was the first thing that came to my mind.

Ms. Meehan: Okay. What else is wonderful?

Comm. Irving: I was quite elated at the scoring of the HSPA last year. I think a lot of that has to do with our restructuring and reorganization of our high schools and the new focuses that many of them have taken. They are all Choice Schools now.

Ms. Meehan: Only the high schools?

Comm. Irving: Yes. We have a few k-12 Choice Schools as well, but primarily high schools are. Do me a favor. Around Choice Schools put quotation marks.

Ms. Meehan: How about the teachers? Do you have dedicated staff?

Comm. Irving: Sure.

Comm. Martinez: When I mentioned resilience, I mentioned teachers as well.

Ms. Meehan: I did put staff up there, but I think they must be dedicated, right? I think to be a teacher you have to be pretty dedicated.

Comm. Irving: I would say teachers, but also central office administration as well. I think we have weeded out over the last three years, or at least the three years I've been here, folks who really need to be here and folks who really don't need to be here. There are still a few folks who are still lingering around, but I think for the most part the

Superintendent, to your credit, has really purged the district of folks who just impede success.

Comm. Mendez: I agree with you.

Ms. Meehan: Everybody wants that.

Comm. Mendez: I don't know if we can mention the result that we had as a Board on QSAC in governance. We scored over 80%. Even though we haven't been recognized in that I think it's a great goal and we continue moving forward in that category. We are directly responsible as a Board. Another thing I would say is the transformation that's happening in the school district is a good thing. We're not where we're supposed to be at this time, but I think that the change that we've been doing in the district I like.

Ms. Meehan: So it's a transition in what?

Comm. Mendez: On the system with the new academies that we're having. I definitely think that's a plus.

Ms. Meehan: System-wide?

Comm. Mendez: Yes. Having a huge school like Kennedy now we have four academies. At a school like Eastside we have different academies in those big schools.

Ms. Meehan: Tell me what you mean by academy. This is new to me. What do you mean by that?

Dr. Evans: We took a comprehensive high school of 2,200 students and divided it into four smaller thematic Choice Schools. There's a theme associated with each one. Actually, that change took place district-wide. All of our high schools now are Choice Schools. Students choose the high schools they wish to attend. Each one has a theme associated with it and that's our attempt to tap into student interests. If students are attracted to a school because of a particular theme they're more likely to complete school, be interested, and perform at higher levels.

Ms. Meehan: That's wonderful.

Dr. Evans: We've totally transformed our high schools and next on the agenda is a more complete transformation of our elementary schools. Right now we have k-8 and middle school is one of the options that's being looked at and talked about and experimented with.

Ms. Meehan: What else is happening here? How about the facilities? Have you done anything? They're a work in progress?

Dr. Evans: Work in progress. That's being kind. Our graduation rates have progressively increased.

Ms. Meehan: Have they? That's wonderful.

Dr. Evans: The number of students who are applying for and are being admitted into a two or four-year college for one group of kids has doubled and for another group has increased by about 35%. The one group I'm talking about is that group of schools we

identified as priority and focus schools. That group has doubled in terms of their college admissions rate. Now we need to follow up and see how many of them actually did go.

Ms. Meehan: But they were admitted. This is good. This is a start. That's wonderful. That's really good news. Tell me what else is really good. You must have a really good support staff.

Dr. Evans: Full service community schools. We had three up until this year and we're adding two more.

Ms. Meehan: What else is great? There are wonderful things happening here. I think this high school academy thing is amazing. I love that idea. Can you share that with other districts? I think that is fantastic.

Dr. Evans: We are. People are inquiring.

Ms. Meehan: There are so many different kids out there who just don't want this box that you're given and some kids just don't excel in that. It's wonderful to have those opportunities. Just for my own curiosity, tell me about the different options in those academies. What are the themes?

Comm. Irving: They are 14 themes.

Ms. Meehan: Fantastic. How has this been accepted?

Dr. Evans: Very well.

Comm. Martinez: I've spoken to several students at the Culinary Academy at Eastside High School and they were just elated. They love it. To go to school and do something that they're passionate about and something that they can apply to their career and lives after school they love it.

Comm. Irving: The hardest part is when there is a school that has a very popular theme and unfortunately because of the numbers some kids can't get in. So we find that in our School Choice process your choice may end up being your second or third choice. But I think most students are good at adaptation and they just get into the program even though it might not be the one they initially signed up for. They kind of buy into the program by and large.

Ms. Meehan: I did a Superintendent search for a technical school. They are the only school that told me they had an increasing enrollment and it's because of that. It's because kids want to go there because they have the specialized programs. I was amazed. I don't know anybody that's got an increasing enrollment at this point in time.

Comm. Irving: We are, but I don't think the programs are driving that.

Ms. Meehan: But there are not very many districts that have increasing enrollment. They are all decreasing. You guys are increasing.

Comm. Irving: We're a transient city.

Ms. Meehan: Right, and that's why you're seeing it. But honest to goodness, this is huge. I love that idea and congratulations. That's something you really should be proud

of. I'm proud for you. I think it's fantastic. What else is good here? I know wonderful things are happening here.

Dr. Evans: Some may not consider it good, but we're considered the leader in the State of New Jersey in the development and implementation of the new principal and teacher evaluation systems.

Ms. Meehan: Wonderful. That was going to my next question – did you implement it? So you already have?

Dr. Evans: It's being implemented for all administrators this year and then we have a pilot group of 15 schools where we're piloting the teacher system. Statewide we're recognized as the leader across the state.

Ms. Meehan: You have 15 pilot programs?

Dr. Evans: No, 15 pilot schools.

Ms. Meehan: Right. Awesome! You're not one of the pilots for making the school year longer, are you?

Dr. Evans: No.

Ms. Meehan: Did you hear that one that just came out? There's a pilot program.

Comm. Martinez: Senator Ruiz piloted that program.

Ms. Meehan: Yes. I actually got to hear her speak and I got to hear everyone testify on her tenure reform bill before it came out. It was very interesting and she was wonderful. She was really good. Tell me what else is happening here?

Comm. Mendez: Did we include the new school for Gifted & Talented? That's something new that's coming out. It's starting this year and it's a new school for kids that are Gifted & Talented. That's something new and great, but we have to see the results.

Ms. Meehan: Okay. That's wonderful.

Comm. Irving: We also instituted a Newcomers School or a Spanish school, School 11. There's one school that is taught primarily in all Spanish.

Ms. Meehan: It's not just an ESL? It's really taught in Spanish?

Comm. Irving: Correct, with the focus on English as an actual course to transition young people from the school to their neighborhood school in about two years.

Ms. Meehan: What do you call it?

Comm. Martinez: The Newcomers School.

Comm. Mendez: To accelerate the learning process.

Ms. Meehan: That's wonderful. How many kids do you have?

Dr. Evans: 210 to 212.

Ms. Meehan: And it's going well?

Dr. Evans: It's growing every week. The growth is rapid.

Ms. Meehan: That's wonderful. You found an area of need. You targeted it, found it, and you've succeeded. That's wonderful.

Comm. Irving: Not everybody liked it at first, but it's catching.

Comm. Martinez: Like Chris mentioned, Paterson is a very transient city so you have a great deal of people who are coming in and shifting out. A lot of these people are coming from countries that don't speak English as the primary language.

Ms. Meehan: (Comments were made away from the microphone and were not heard on tape.)

Comm. Mendez: Finally, we have a uniform policy in the district. Almost all our schools are wearing uniforms. We can identify our students. They look great. We took fashion out of the schools finally. We're taking fashion out of the schools. We're not there yet, but I believe that's a great plus because finally our kids are going to be able to focus on the learning process instead of the sneakers, jeans, sweaters, and all that. I believe that's a great plus.

Ms. Meehan: Can I ask you a question? I was in a district on Tuesday night and they just instated this uniform policy. They're in Passaic County also. There were parents there that were saying that they couldn't afford the uniforms, so they did allow them to buy them somewhere else. Their policy actually read that they had to buy them at a specific place, so they're going to go back and readdress the policy because that was really kind of a silly thing because you can't all buy at one place. But they were also saying that they were having a hard time. The one thing I did tell them that I had known about was like a uniform swap. The kids who have outgrown it can bring it even if it's to a PTO. They bring it there and then at the end of the year you have a swap. But is there anything else you guys came up with for lower income? They were really having a difficult time. They didn't know what to do.

Comm. Martinez: That might be something that might be able to fall under in progress. I don't know if it's something that was mandated in the policy that they have to purchase the uniforms from a certain place. Some of the schools require that maybe the uniform that you purchase has the school logo or something like that. So if you were to purchase it at a certain location it would be a lot more expensive than going to a Target or JC Penney. You can buy blue sweatpants with the white t-shirt without the logo at significantly lower prices. That was discussed.

Comm. Irving: At this stage the way the policy reads each school via the parents has the option to opt into a uniform. So while we encourage it we give it to the parents to be the ones that ultimately make the decision per school. Once that's done each principal is responsible for identifying with the parents and the kids what the uniform looks like and where they get it from. Some principals take a very generic way. You can go to Kohl's or K-Mart.

Ms. Meehan: They have uniforms right there.

Comm. Irving: But then some of our other folks have used other vendors that are being a little costly. That literally just came up and it's a conversation I think we certainly need to have.

Ms. Meehan: The other thing I want to tell you is they were also tying it to free and reduced lunch with vouchers somehow. I don't know how that worked and I didn't get the whole gist of it, but somehow they were doing some type of voucher. If you bought from that company you might be able to get a voucher or some discounted rate. So there were all kinds of tough things that were coming up and I have these rolling around my head and now you're the next group I'm with talking about uniforms. The swap was something that was huge for next year because they just started this year also. So next year might be a really good idea. It's expensive if you have a lot of kids like me. You need to do whatever you can because it does get expensive.

Comm. Irving: Alex has a lot of kids, too.

Ms. Meehan: I have four.

Comm. Mendez: That's what I want. I want four, but my wife says no. When it comes to uniforms we have to keep it plain and simple. If you go to Wal-Mart you can't beat that price. If you have two or three kids you can go with a little bit of money and you can buy uniforms or those three kids. If you have to buy regular clothes you will have to come up with a humongous amount of money to do that. We have to keep it plain and simple to make sure they can go anywhere they want and get the color, which is the most important thing, and that the kids look presentable and with a uniform. That's the goal. We have to make sure it's cost-effective for the parents. That's the key.

Ms. Meehan: There's also a program by me and I know that I used it for scouting stuff, Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts. I know I'm getting off target, but that's the mother in me. Sorry. But if you turned in your scouting uniform that didn't fit you can pick up another one. Then when my kids were done with it I gave it all except the sash because for Girl Scouts you keep that because it's got all the badges on it. But the rest of it you just give back and it's like paying it forward. They don't do it for very long sometimes. But that's the swap with the uniforms. It comes in really handy. I just wanted to brainstorm with you about that because I want to offer them some information too.

Comm. Martinez: One more thing that might be worth noting is the Breakfast After the Bell Program. Maybe we can include that there as something wonderful happening.

Ms. Meehan: Do you have pre-k? Is it just a handicapped or special education service?

Comm. Irving: We have district-driven preschool and outside provider-driven preschool programs. Actually, our preschool program is very strong.

Dr. Evans: We have 3,500 students.

Ms. Meehan: Wow! That's wonderful too. How about after school? Do you have programs in here that offer that?

Dr. Evans: Every school offers after-school program tutorials, either funded through SES dollars or 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning grants and those kinds of things. But it's available at every school at every level.

Comm. Irving: Let me just interject, because my job is to continue to move this on. I think we have a good comprehensive list. Let's move this on.

Ms. Meehan: Okay. You got it. I just want you to see what you have. Tell me what's in progress other than what we have there.

Dr. Evans: A lot.

Ms. Meehan: Tell me what's in progress? What's going on? Do you have any kinds of projects that you're working on right now?

Dr. Evans: The transformation is the category. It's huge. Why don't we start with three years ago? Transforming our high schools was at the top of the list and we've done that, but it's still on the list because in some ways it's a work in progress. There's still some curriculum work that's necessary there to get it to where we want it.

Ms. Meehan: So is the curriculum aligned with Core Curriculum?

Dr. Evans: I was going to note that as a separate initiative. The curriculum work at the high school level is to add more rigor, more depth to the course work, and expand content in some areas. The Common Core really is a separate initiative to align with the new state Common Core that the 46 states have bought into, New Jersey being one of them. So that's a separate initiative.

Ms. Meehan: But that's in progress where you're starting to align?

Dr. Evans: We've already developed a math curriculum that is fully aligned with the new Common Core and we're working on English Language Arts. In the meantime we're using the state's model curriculum for English Language Arts. But that's an initiative. The teacher and principal evaluation system that we alluded to is in progress.

Ms. Meehan: You have a lot that's in progress.

Comm. Irving: I don't know how best this qualifies or quantifies, but the RACs and their relationship to the district. I think currently in progress would be the exact word to use.

Dr. Evans: And actually it's progressing. Things are moving up and some of the issues are being addressed that we've raised.

Comm. Irving: Here's the problem – we don't know about that.

Dr. Evans: It just happened. I was in Trenton today. It's brand new and my charge is to write something to feed back to the Commissioner and that group that ultimately may serve as a model for how they operate across the state. So there is some new development there and I'm just happy that we're in the forefront of that. Innovation Zone is actually more than simply a reference to a group of schools. It's implementation of an instructional model called the Principles of Learning.

Ms. Meehan: Different than evaluation.

Dr. Evans: Yes, it is different. Actually, both references are appropriate to include. Innovation Zone is the identification of a group of schools and included in that group of schools are our lowest performing schools, and then the Institute for Learning/Principles of Learning.

Ms. Meehan: Let me write this out.

Dr. Evans: Principles of Learning is an instructional model, a set of expectations and practices that guide the delivery of instruction, practices that teachers use to deliver it - methods, strategies...

Ms. Meehan: Differentiated and some of that.

Dr. Evans: Exactly. The Institute for Learning is the entity...(end of tape) (Beginning of new tape)...process redesign is a major focus of our work, redoing all of our operational processes and procedures. A group named the American Productivity Quality Center is leading that effort for us.

Ms. Meehan: Someone is doing this?

Dr. Evans: They're doing it through our staff, but they're leading it. They convene a committee of our staff here and school folk to look at processes and procedures and determine where they're not functioning. That's not difficult to find, where they're not functioning very well. Then they facilitate a series of activities with the group to develop new procedures or tighten up the existing procedures, depending on which is necessary. They've done that with HR. In fact, the Board just saw the results of that work with our hiring procedures yesterday. They are working on it now with registration and transportation systems. They've done it with some of the curriculum areas and curriculum development work and a number of other areas.

Ms. Meehan: I think that's wonderful. Wow! That's the first time I've heard of that. That's very nice. I like that. What needs help this year?

Dr. Evans: Implementing all this stuff.

Comm. Cleaves: Effective communication.

Dr. Evans: Communication is at the top of the list. I agree.

Comm. Irving: I would certainly love to see a Board-specific plan and strategy for how we get and give communication, but also a plan for how the community gives and gets that. One of the things I've observed is you have Kemper's office and Terry's office, but both are quite territorial with regard to their respective roles and I acknowledge that. But case in point with the forum at School 6, Terry's office helped to get the information out but Kemper never got any information about the forum. We're in the forum and everybody looks at Kemper because he's the guy who should know. But if that information isn't going to someone like him, how can he disseminate it out? The unfortunate part is in the eyes of everyone there everybody looks at him as the guy who should be doing that. He just kind of eats it, but I told him at the meeting that he has to say something because no one knows that you didn't know about this. That's a problem. You can't be a good soldier because it doesn't help the system as we move forward. There will be more forums, events, and opportunities where we need a connected piece between communication and family community engagement.

Ms. Meehan: That's that bridge we talked about.

Comm. Martinez: To that point, just staying on School 6, I don't think there's one cookie-cutter approach that you can just throw over the blanket of the district and say



it's going to work. I think each school is individual in the approaches you have to take to it. For example, perhaps the families at School 6 don't have access to computers and phones. Maybe take a more grassroots approach. Like you said, the backpacks or word of mouth might be something that would be more effective. To Chris' point, if the left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing it's not going to function. So to kind of bridge that gap first and then take a specific approach to each school because I think each school is very different in the way you can go after this. I think that's a good approach to take.

Comm. Cleaves: I think what also needs to happen this year is we need to follow up. There have been so many changes instituted that we need to make sure that they're doing what they're supposed to be doing, just staying on top of the changes that we're implementing in the district. We as a Board, cabinet and Dr. Evans have to make sure that we follow up and make sure that these things are being done. We can't wait until next year and then you want to do evaluation and we've done nothing all year long to make sure that it was happening. So I think follow-up is something that we need to do.

Ms. Meehan: So let me ask you if I'm understanding. If you're setting the goals and Dr. Evans is going to give you the progress towards those district goals during the year, is that what you're talking about with the follow-up, getting that information during the year?

Comm. Cleaves: Correct. Or when it's goal-setting time at the beginning of the school year this is what we set to do last year and now we're getting a report before the new school year begins. But during the course of the year we haven't followed up to make sure.

Ms. Meehan: Do you know what? It leads right back to here.

Comm. Irving: I don't think it does. I think what you're talking about is setting a barometer or a set standard of accountability. What Dr. Evans just shared with you is exactly the scope and the breadth of which the initiatives are going on in this district. This is a district of 30,000 kids and 150,000 people. Our budget is absolutely large. Could we certainly use more? Without a doubt, but we also manage a great deal of money. So I would even venture to say there are two dozen various different initiatives going on at any point in time. I think one of the difficult pieces of the Board is staying on track of all those initiatives. Case in point, last night when Dr. Newell was here and we gave her some suggestions on different community-based groups. I think I said we'd love to hear from you. I think there needs to be a clear timeline that we say in two months we're going to hear from Dr. Newell and she's able to say it's now been two months and it's time to hear from so-and-so.

Comm. Cleaves: To set benchmarks for ourselves.

Comm. Irving: Exactly.

Comm. Martinez: So perhaps for lack of a better word, to keep track of the progress as it's going on. So month to month or bimonthly you're keeping that. So as Chrystal was saying, you're not waiting until the end and then say where we are. Then you have to backtrack and say what did we do all this time? If you're keeping a running record of the progress as you're going in real time it's a lot easier to monitor. You can track where we have to improve.

Comm. Irving: I think you also get a higher level of accountability.

Comm. Martinez: Absolutely.

Comm. Cleaves: It also goes back to the fencing. That's something that happened and we were always at that meeting and we had no clue as to what was going on.

Ms. Meehan: Let me get this right now. Are you talking about the information that you're getting at committee level? Or are you talking about progress towards the district goals? Are you talking about the things that are happening now?

Comm. Irving: I think we're talking more about district goals and initiatives.

Ms. Meehan: Okay. So you were talking about fencing. That would be something under facilities, buildings, and grounds that might have come through and that's something that might be a goal for them. Actually, at each committee you have a chair and that person needs to be keeping track and put a calendar down and say we need more accountability in that lower level. But as far as district goals the Superintendent you can say, Dr. Evans we'd like every two or three months for you to tell us how we're doing on these. Have we hit any benchmarks? This is the vicious circle. What happens is you set your goals and then you'll get your progress towards district goals throughout the year. Then in March you have to start to do your evaluation process. Do you guys do an evaluation of Dr. Evans?

Comm. Irving: Yes.

Ms. Meehan: So then what happens is you're evaluating him partially on these district goals. Therefore, the progress towards district goals through the year that he's giving you is giving you the information and then at the time of evaluation he goes online for School Boards and if not you do your own. Then you'll write down the district goals and have you achieved them or not. That's what you're going to partially evaluate him on and then you set more goals. That's that vicious circle. Then you do your self-evaluation in there too. But as you're doing it right now he's really only got six months to hit these goals. So it's kind of like a short time, which is what I've been telling everybody that I'm doing goals with right now. It's a short period of time. I cringed when you said five goals. That's a lot because you guys have a lot going on. What's in progress are quite a few items right now. The money might be there, but it's the time, effort, and energy that have to be put into those goals to make them really count. You want them to be measurable. You want to be able to reach them and achieve them because otherwise you're setting up for failure. But I think to maybe limit them because of the time that you have right now might be four max, but it's up to you guys. They're your goals.

Comm. Mendez: I would say that for those projects for what's going on in the district we have the staff in charge of that. We have the people who are responsible for that to happen. I would say that by doing the follow-up that we have to do and holding the staff accountable, I believe in that. I'm a straight shooter. If I hire you to do a job at the end I expect the job to be done. Otherwise, you're responsible to drop the ball halfway. I definitely think we have to push that. We have to move a little fast in that direction, holding staff accountable. We have the staff for all those projects. There are people with names in place to make sure that happens. If that doesn't happen there's the name of the person in charge and responsible for that not happening.

Ms. Meehan: That goes to him. That's his job.

Comm. Mendez: I give the same example all the time. When you have a strong leader in the building, a strong principal, you see how things start moving fast and you see the results at the end of the year. You can compare with other buildings and you can tell right away. I will tell you, you will have an answer right there. The leadership in the building, the follow-up, the person responsible to make sure that the job gets done - at the end that's what's going to make the difference in the district. When you have a job and you know that there's going to be a consequence if you don't get the job done you make sure that things get done. But if you don't feel that there's a consequence behind that, guess what? I'm sorry. We couldn't get it done. That's fine. Next year will be another year and our kids continue falling on the side.

Ms. Meehan: There are consequences for every decision you make.

Comm. Irving: I would add our QSAC review that's coming up should be successful in achieving 80.

Ms. Meehan: When is QSAC again?

Comm. Irving: We're looking at having it some time in early October. Am I correct?

Dr. Evans: Next week. It starts on the 10<sup>th</sup>.

Ms. Meehan: So this will be done? Perfect. Out of the district goals which came from your long range strategic plan that Dr. Evans gave you, what are you looking at? What you're telling me of what needs to be done is communication. So is there a goal on there of communication that you want to see happen on here? For QSAC you have to have a student achievement goal. That's certainly up to you what you want to see as that student achievement goal.

Comm. Irving: Dr. Evans does have in here to improve internal and external communication. I would revamp that to be a little more granular. My opinion is to improve communication between district office and the Board and from the Board to the community at large. Then the focus is really on two specific parameters, which is how do we become tighter and then how do we ensure the district and the community becomes tighter. In that, the focus lies there as opposed to trying to touch so many different places.

Ms. Meehan: Which number were you looking at?

Comm. Irving: Number three.

Ms. Meehan: That was on the first one and you gave me a half-check on that one, so that one could be continued. But my question is, would you consider that your communications goal?

Comm. Irving: Yes.

Ms. Meehan: Because there's number four, which is build internal capacity to support school improvement. Or number five is to expand choice options for students in grades k-8, which is what you were talking about doing. What's in progress is the middle school part. So that middle school part with revamping kind of spoke to me for number five as part of including that into that. But you guys have to think about what you want to do.

Comm. Irving: I would definitely go with the communication piece.

Ms. Meehan: So you definitely want number three in there. That's good.

Comm. Irving: Again, I would be careful in being more specific with the language. I would say improve Board to central office communication and Board to community communication. Does that make sense, Dr. Evans?

Dr. Evans: It makes sense, but as long as we understand it's not limiting. There are a number of district to community direct, not through the Board, communications.

Ms. Meehan: Right. So do you like that wordsmith?

Dr. Evans: I'm fine with the wording that's there.

Ms. Meehan: My question to you is because now you're charged with doing the action plan, is this okay and does this fit in? Can you do that? Everybody is okay with that one? It's a good goal. It's funny because most of these all come back to student achievement anyway because once you improve the communication it comes back to student achievement. They really all go back to it.

Comm. Martinez: All these goals are going to be interconnected towards what you just stated. There's so much overlap between communication and every goal that we're going to set is ultimately going to go right back to what you stated about improving student achievement. It's all going to trickle down.

Ms. Meehan: It said communication to improve student achievement, but you don't even have to add that because what's going to happen is part of the action plan will tell all because it is going to come back and it's going to show. The next goal needs to be student achievement really specific. I personally like all these goals to come back to student achievement because that's where they should be. Did you like the first one? There's a climate one on there too that was very nice. I have to thank you because these are very well-written. This is part of your strategic plan, right?

Dr. Evans: Yes.

Ms. Meehan: These are great. Close the achievement gap and increase student achievement for all students. Sometimes it's really difficult to pinpoint that down to a certain area because you're limiting yourself. You're writing the goal, which is the "what", and Dr. Evans is going to tell you the "how." The Board is the "what" and the Superintendent is the "how." We need new light bulbs or we need light. He says this is how we're going to do it. The biggest joke is how many Board members does it take to screw in a light bulb? None - it's not your job. So the biggest part of the goal is the "what." So it doesn't have to be so specific. It can be more general because the action plan will come in and be the specific part of it. That's the "how."

Dr. Evans: That particular one also begs for an additional indicator and that indicator should focus on the achievement gap. If you improve student achievement with all subgroups obviously there's a suggestion that perhaps – and you can over-assume on that – you're addressing the achievement gap. But if everybody is improving at the same rate the gap still exists. We have 14 Focus Elementary Schools that are there because of achievement gaps. An 'E' needs to be here to focus on closing those achievement gaps with the measure being we're going to reduce the number of schools that are Focus Schools.

Ms. Meehan: Right. So that would be an added part to your action plan. Also, I'm sure you've heard this. It's really being touted because the Department of Education really wants to see student growth per year as opposed to just specific numbers on a test. So, that child between third and fourth grade they want to know did they grow that year and between fourth and fifth grade they're marking growth. There are pros and cons, but the student growth is actually hopefully going to tell them a little bit more.

Comm. Martinez: How do you define growth if not just through scores?

Ms. Meehan: Dr. Evans is going to tell you that.

Dr. Evans: There are different scores actually. There is the HSPA and the NJASK that tell us one thing, but then a test like STAR or other kinds of tests tell us something else, a different kind of growth, as well as areas where there might be some deficits as well, but there're still test scores nonetheless. But that's the primary measure now.

Ms. Meehan: Unfortunately, you guys just get data. Data is data and you get all different kinds, but this is probably another type that you'll end up seeing with the student growth.

Dr. Evans: And let me say this. This conversation at the state level is driven by a business model. In business, profit is the bottom line. So those that drive this approach are really imposing a business model and there's a strong argument for that.

Ms. Meehan: Let's see what happens. We never know what's coming down the pike, do we?

Comm. Martinez: There are so many other factors that kind of lend themselves to the academic growth, to that bottom line. Culture, lifestyle, and all those other things that you can't quantify on paper per se, but they lend themselves to improvement of these scores and the bottom line. Those are things that perhaps can't be measured in those substantial ways. But I think that's just more of an intangible type of thing that you can continue to gauge and monitor as you go on.

Ms. Meehan: All those things add in and it's just so hard to measure.

Comm. Martinez: You might see growth in those other areas. It's not reflective in those scores and the bottom lines, but there's still growth nevertheless. So it's a slippery slope.

Comm. Irving: I'm apropos to accept the goals Dr. Evans has submitted as long as we modify it to the Board. Case in point is what we just talked about, to replace Goal 3 with the information we just gave. I would say under Goal 1 Section C, one of the bullets talks about having high-quality teachers in every classroom. There should be something about the new Teacher Academy put in there and retooling teachers who have been deemed necessary to retool.

Ms. Meehan: And also to add "E" like you were saying. Do you like the wording of it, close the achievement gap? We can use that for an achievement goal?

Dr. Evans: Yes.

Comm. Irving: I feel comfortable.

Dr. Evans: Actually, I had included that as a subset for Goal 1, adding an “E” as an indicator.

Ms. Meehan: Right.

Dr. Evans: The measure is to reduce the 14 elementary schools down to ultimately zero.

Ms. Meehan: I really like that it says for all students because I was at the lighthouse project that School Boards had brought in and they tell this one story and it's silly but it's not and it really touched home to me. There are kids getting off the bus and if there are 20 kids they're saying that 18 of them are going to make it. Who chooses those two that aren't going to make it, and why? All students should succeed. It's not that they're all going to be brain surgeons, but every child needs to succeed, whether it be at their level or maybe just a little bit higher or whatever it may be, but they all need the chance. So I love that it says this. It's something that some Boards don't want to put in there. I actually had a Board member who argued with me and said no. So to me this is important because you really need to and you guys seem to be doing a great job of trying to hit everybody, just like the different programs you put into effect. I'm really impressed because you're hitting such a large area of people. Like you said, they're transient. You don't know who's going to be here tomorrow and who's going to be gone, but you have programs for everybody, which is wonderful.

Comm. Irving: I just want to make sure I'm clear on this. We're adding to “C” a bullet that talks about the new Teacher Academy and we're also adding “E” that talks about closing the achievement gap? I just want to make sure we're clear on that.

Dr. Evans: Yes.

Comm. Martinez: The bullet under “C” would be?

Comm. Irving: Teacher Academy, creating and retooling teachers who have been deemed in need of additional support.

Ms. Meehan: Dr. Evans, when I send this to you I won't send you your action plan. I'll just send you the goals themselves because you already have these. The other one is up to you. If you want to do four, you can do four. If you want to do three, you can do three. You tell me. Create a healthy school culture, the communication part you got. That was huge. QSAC is obviously something that you're working towards, which is why I'm here. You hit the communication part. School culture and your curriculum part, which would be expand Choice options for students in grades k-8 would fit under Gifted & Talented curriculum. You can make a goal to implement and to assess your new teacher evaluation system. That can be a goal that you'd like to have done because it has to be done. You have deadlines for October 30. December 30 is the other deadline. These are things that actually have to get done. So it's up to you. You tell me what you want to do. Do you want to put in there another goal towards expanding Choice options? Actually that fit here and here, transformation of middle school. It's something that you told me was in progress and you'd like it to continue.

Comm. Irving: I would say yes. I like the concept of Choice. My only issue has always been how we always arrive at the Choice models. I think this year was a step in the right direction towards having a much more inclusive conversation with the Board about those Choice options and what those models look like. When I first got here some of

those options were beginning to be imposed on the Board and we got the information after the fact. This year we got a lot more information upfront and also in the midst of, as opposed to when it was just implemented. But that's my only caveat when we're talking about expanding Choice. This has to be an ongoing conversation that the Board again, as you said Chrystal, is regularly updated upon as we move forward.

Ms. Meehan: So this is good. And the action plan that's on here seems to fit. That's okay?

Comm. Irving: Yes. I would say so.

Ms. Meehan: Everybody is okay. Do you want a fourth one? This is a lot. There's a lot of work involved in this. To sit here and make up these goals seems like not a big deal. But there's a lot of work involved in getting here, there really is.

Comm. Martinez: Without the risk of being overly ambitious I think this is a good place. We've identified these goals and we want to make sure they're things we can attain and achieve. I'm comfortable with this.

Ms. Meehan: The other thing I was going to tell you, and I just talked briefly about, was setting a Board goal or two for you guys - maybe setting an evaluation calendar that I'll send to you. It's not a big deal. It's not even a goal actually. It's just something you need to fill out so that you can keep on target with where you guys need to be as a Board so that you're in place where you need to be. Another thought that I had might be just for some more training. There are so many things that School Boards offers. You pay dues for School Boards. You may get sick of seeing me, but I can come in and give you these trainings. I feel that it's always good because there's always something new happening and there's always something to learn. If you're interested I'd be more than willing to come back and talk and talk. But we really do have a lot of programs to offer. There are roles and responsibilities. There's one really good one that I like on how Boards work together. It's kind of a fun activity. It makes it fun but yet all of sudden you realize that's why Joe keeps asking the same question over and over again because he's that type of personality. It just gives you a really good idea. You guys seem to work really well together. It's a nice group to work with, but there's always the training.

Comm. Mendez: I think we should travel a little more as a Board.

Comm. Irving: I think the only Board goal that comes to mind is I'm stuck on this whole creating a mechanism where we can get regular updates from the Superintendent on initiatives that are happening in the district either quarterly or bimonthly or something like that. We're the ones who help drive that, so we're the ones who are receiving that information and getting the updates. We get so much stuff thrown at us and at least for myself it's hard to keep up and say I meant to ask the Superintendent about so and so. But as we're able to give Cheryl that information and say in two months remind us to put this on the agenda, to me it's a much better way of keeping on top of tasks that need to be kept on top of. So when someone is done we can say, "Cheryl, in two or three months we want to see this person again. Can you just make sure you put it on the Board agenda in that timeframe?"

Ms. Meehan: How about if you set a calendar for progress towards district goals from the Superintendent?

Comm. Irving: It's the same thing.

Ms. Meehan: Typically you're supposed to write an action plan for your goal. You really just have to set a calendar. You have to come to a consensus because it's communication again, but you have to make sure that Dr. Evans is okay and on board. You say, every two months can we get an update? This is what we'd like to know. Where do we stand on these goals? It's reasonable to ask for that every few months. I wouldn't say you need a monthly update. That's kind of crazy.

Comm. Irving: You also need time for growth.

Ms. Meehan: Exactly. I do have to tell you for 13 years on my Board probably the first six years I didn't know I was getting progress towards district goals. I'm very specific. You need to say, "Here Robynn, this is what you're looking at." If you don't, I kind of see it but I didn't know that was what I was getting. For the longest time I thought we weren't getting it and then finally my Superintendent said to me that's what he'd been doing when he tells me this. So sometimes you're getting that information and you don't even realize it. What I tell Boards sometimes it's good to do is you take one these papers, you write your district goals on it, and you bring it to every meeting because really this is what you're working towards. Hang your district goals up there on a piece of paper. You're governed by policy and that's what you are, a policy-making Board, but realistically what you're doing is setting goals and you're working towards them. So the decisions that you're making during the year should be really based on those goals. That's why you even do a strategic plan, so that you have that long-term. So this is okay. Dr. Evans, they are going to ask you if they can have an update on progress towards district goals like every couple of months. Is that going to work?

Comm. Irving: That's a yes.

Ms. Meehan: That's a head nod.

Dr. Evans: But at some point we need to talk about what that's going to look like. The report can be very comprehensive and detailed, which requires a lot of time and energy to put together.

Ms. Meehan: Sometimes it's only just a Superintendent's newsletter. At some of the districts that I've worked in every couple of months you just get a brief overview of what's happening towards this goal. It doesn't need to be a lot of his time because honestly time is money too. But it does need to be addressed so you know where you stand.

Comm. Irving: My experience has been on other boards that you request what the indicator is prior to the time it comes. You may say, "Dr. Evans, can we see in two months the numbers for how many students have done A, B, C, and D." At least we know what we're working towards. If people have questions that go outside of that in two months you can say that's not what you asked for. You asked me to provide A, B, C, and D. We can work on that and we can get it to you in the next round of updates, but I think we need to be specific with our requests if we're asking for additional information following the two or three months. We need to be specific in what we're looking for so that staff member or whoever the appropriate person is giving that information isn't blindsided or isn't working unnecessarily for information that is just vague. I think that to me is a process that makes sense. We're specific about what our requests are ahead of time.



Ms. Meehan: That's fair, as long as you're letting him know exactly what you're looking for. This is the communication piece that's wonderful because nobody wants to be blindsided. So if you're saying this is what we're looking for and in two months can you give us an update, then he knows and that's good. That gives you what you're looking for. Is everybody okay with that?

Comm. Irving: As long as Cheryl is okay with it because she'll be the one keeping us all updated.

Ms. Meehan: Do we have a head nod from Cheryl?

Comm. Irving: She never says no. She's just too good.

Comm. Mendez: She's always ready.

Ms. Meehan: She was wonderful. She just kept answering my calls. That was good. Do you want another goal for training, or do you not? Do you want to just keep it like this and then we look at things and you guys go to some training down at workshop and then next year we take a look at what's going on?

Comm. Irving: Yes. I would say our Board works quite well with each other compared to what I've seen in other districts and other Boards. We certainly aren't all to the left or to the right or even to the center on certain issues, but I think we are all civil for the most part and most importantly I think we all respect each other.

Ms. Meehan: That's huge. The one thing that you do need to have is ethics. Have you had ethics for the year for QSAC?

Comm. Irving: For 2012 we did.

Ms. Meehan: For this QSAC are you on target? I did bring the papers with me.

Dr. Evans: It's a part of governance and governance is not being reviewed as a part of this QSAC visit.

Ms. Meehan: Okay. I have the ethics stuff with me.

Comm. Irving: Just hand it out. It does not hurt. Do we have to sign that we have received?

Ms. Meehan: Yes. If you decide that you want to discuss this further let me e-mail you the answers so you have them. There are scenarios in here that some of them you will just really laugh.

Comm. Irving: Has it changed from year to year?

Ms. Meehan: They did put new ones in. I think they're the same as last year, but I do want to tell you that they actually are all real. They've all happened in New Jersey in the past couple of years and you can't make this stuff up. If you have a chance, just look through them. They really are very good. Maybe you did them last year. I don't know. I really love the one about the Board member that has a cell phone sitting out and they're in executive session and they're texting the person outside to ask the correct question when they come out of executive session. It did happen. It's really

bad, but it does happen and these are all true stories. Does anybody have any questions?

Comm. Irving: I just want to know, what are our next steps as far as getting this information and then making sure it's given to Cheryl, the Board, and the Superintendent?

Ms. Meehan: I'm going to go home and probably I would say by Tuesday or Wednesday I will have all this compiled. I will put it all into a document and send it to you. Do I have your e-mail addresses?

Comm. Irving: Cheryl will give it to you.

Ms. Meehan: No problem. I'll send it to you and then you guys can share it with everybody. With that I will include an action plan template. You already have one, but I'll send it anyway just in case. There's an action plan template for the Board goal, just in case you want to do it, but you know what you're doing here. You know what this is and you've already come to an agreement with it. I'll also send you a sampling of what School Boards offers in case you decide that you want some training or want to just go over something. Anything that you need, just give a call with that and I'll come back and I can talk and talk and talk. But other than that, I will send this to you next week. You said your QSAC was October 10?

Dr. Evans: Yes. It starts the 10<sup>th</sup>. Is that Wednesday?

Comm. Irving: Yes.

Ms. Meehan: I'll have it to you before then so it's all on hand and it will all be in the document so you have your goals and everything all done.

Comm. Irving: Thank you very much. Robynn, thank you so much for your help. We appreciate it.

Ms. Meehan: You're welcome. You guys are such a pleasure to work with. Thank you. Your B.A. needs these to keep on file.

Comm. Irving: Cheryl can give these to you.

Ms. Meehan: Cheryl is the keeper of everything. Does anybody have any other questions?

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS SESSION**

**It was moved by Comm. Mendez, seconded by Comm. Cleaves that the Public Comments portion of the meeting be opened. On roll call all members voted in the affirmative. The motion carried.**

No speakers.

**It was moved by Comm. Guzman, seconded by Comm. Cleaves that the Public Comments portion of the meeting be closed. On roll call all members voted in the affirmative. The motion carried.**

**It was moved by Comm. Mendez, seconded by Comm. Cleaves that the meeting be adjourned. On roll call all members voted in the affirmative. The motion carried.**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.