The Jeffries Plan

Opportunities for Education Transformation

Collaboration
Transparency
Optimism

All In For Newark
Overview
Dear Neighbors:

The current state of education in Newark is unacceptable. I offer this assessment not as a politician but as a father of two small children attending school in Newark. It’s unacceptable when only about half of young people in Newark earn a high school diploma. It is also unacceptable when an overwhelming majority of Newark students that attend local community colleges require remediation in both English and math.

Transforming Newark lies in our ability to transform our schools. If we fail to focus on improving public education, the future economic and social viability of Newark, the State of New Jersey, and the nation as a whole will be compromised. When elected mayor of Newark, I will work every day to make sure that our schools are educating our children.

The challenge before us now as Newarkers is to increase the number of high-performing schools to a tipping point where excellence is the norm, such that parents will know that no matter the options presented before them, all choices will lead to a quality education for each and every child in our city.

As mayor, I will work in collaboration with school leaders and the community to achieve a multi-faceted approach to create opportunities for education transformation:

1) Regaining local control of our schools from the State of New Jersey so Newarkers, not Trenton politicians, are making decisions about our children’s future;

2) Making sure all Newark students are college and career ready so they can reach their limitless potential and begin a journey to serve the Newark community;

3) Empowering our educators and providing professional development to advance their skills in ways that serve the individual needs of children;

4) Guaranteeing that our children are studying in a safe environment that contributes to learning and allows our students to recognize the value of positive school culture;

5) Reinvesting in traditional public schools by providing modern and technically advanced learning facilities;

6) Expanding after-school programs and extended learning time for children; and

7) Ensuring parental choice so parents can choose the best school option for their child.

I am confident that addressing our challenge to improve education in Newark is not held up due to a lack of solutions. Rather, it is a lack of the essential complement of resources coupled with the right political will and committed leadership that it takes to execute on solutions. Drawing from my experiences as a civil rights lawyer, a state-level executive in charge of education programs for juveniles convicted of crime, the former chair of the advisory board of Newark Public Schools, the founding board chairperson of a public charter school, and most importantly, as a father of two small children attending school in Newark, I will be able to leverage my influence as mayor to drive the kind of actions that will yield rapid, measurable success for all learners.

Shavar Jeffries, 2014 Mayoral Candidate

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Governance to Achieve Education Transformation

Recently, politicians in Newark and throughout New Jersey have touted educational achievements with pride. With 35% of New Jersey residents possessing bachelor’s degrees, the state exceeds the national average. However, to view the educational realities of Newark is to see a far bleaker picture. Though there are six institutions of higher learning located in Newark that include world class universities, only 12% of our residents earn bachelor’s degrees, the result of an educational system that has failed to deliver on the most significant marker of American mobility and success.

Despite the current state of education in Newark, I believe that proven leadership can change the status quo. As Newarkers, we know that there are stories of educational excellence throughout our city that remind us of what is possible. I can readily think of educators that live on my street in the South Ward and around the corner from my home who go above and beyond the call of duty to teach, encourage and nurture their students’ growth. There are those in my own family who have done the same over the five generations that we have called Newark home.

The work now requires knowledge, grit and persistence – traits that are embedded in me and in the DNA of Newark’s residents. I welcome your partnership and your support.

To achieve an education transformation for Newark, I commit to:

- Fight for local control by pressing key state legislators in Trenton to enact legislation to clearly specify steps for return of local control while at the same time working with key local educators from teachers to the superintendent to ensure that students are reaching benchmarks of success.

- Maximize reinvestment in traditional public education so neighborhood schools can be as competitive as any school while at the same time securing the growth of charter schools in response to the demand by Newark parents for school choice.

- Create accountability and transparency in funding and budget allocations so Newarkers are aware of every dollar spent on education.

- Develop a broad coalition of public/private partnerships to invest in Newark-based innovations that generate additional resources to support student achievement.

- Increase parent engagement both at the school level and system-wide so parents are informed on policies and practices that affect their children.

Over time, Newark will boast improved schools, increased college and career readiness, and higher rates of parent engagement. As mayor, my administration will seek to address the pervasive systematic and policy failures that continue to contribute to the dramatic under-performance of public schools in Newark and the disenfranchisement of Newarkers in education decision-making.
Winning the Fight for Local Control

As mayor, I am committed to returning control of our public schools back to the people of Newark. Bringing our school system under local control will make sure that our voices are not ignored in the process of making decisions that affect our children. The State of New Jersey took over our schools over 18 years ago and, sadly, not much has improved.

I am confident that Newarkers are invested in Newark and that a school board with true legislative power will invite a wealth of experienced citizens to serve. In return, Newark Public Schools will be better managed and the best practices in education will be employed in our schools every day and for all students.

In 2011 under his leadership as chair of the Newark Public Schools Advisory Board, NPS received its highest ratings since state takeover in four of the five QSAC areas, moving Newark the closest it’s ever been to regaining local control. Shavar Jeffries worked closely with then Superintendent Clifford Janey to ensure state benchmarks were met.

Local control is important because Newarkers know what is best for Newark. As citizens, local control is our right, and our voices must be heard. As mayor, I will fight for our right to self-determination and will not allow this important issue to be mired in politics and controlled by those without real connections to Newark. I will also demonstrate the experience of my leadership on local control, and I will work in partnership with the school board and NPS to ensure proper governance critical to obtaining local control is the top priority.

Demanding College Readiness

I believe that every student in the city of Newark needs to be prepared for college and on track for career success. In an age of increasing levels of competition for jobs in Newark and across the country, young people in Newark high schools must be prepared to succeed in emerging labor markets that demand highly skilled workers. Our children must be equipped with an academic foundation while also benefiting from effective college and career counseling that allows them to compete on a global scale. I am committed to working tirelessly to see that every child in Newark is prepared to start and complete college and also achieve success in life.

Attending colleges and universities is an opportunity that should not be limited to a select few or for someone else’s child living in some other community. Our students in Newark are as bright and ambitious as any other students in the world. It is important that college readiness is a top priority for our public schools.
As the former chair of the Newark Public Schools Advisory Board and as a civil rights lawyer who has sued on the behalf of Newark students, I know firsthand the undeniable advantages that a college education provides. If young people in Newark are to reach their limitless potential, we need to continue to examine the effectiveness of certain education benchmarks related to national standards, state testing, and teacher quality. Our children deserve better and should be afforded a first-rate education so they can pursue careers that benefit their future and allow them to serve their community.

Empowering Educators

I believe that our students deserve great teachers in every classroom and in every school in Newark. Teachers and principals have critically important jobs and should be paid more, provided first-rate professional development, and empowered to succeed. As a teacher and law professor myself, I support teachers and respect their service to the families of the city of Newark. However, raising the ranks of professionalism in education also means building measures of accountability in assessing student performance.

The district must implement effective evidence-based professional development programs for our educators that are customized for an individual’s development needs. It is critical that we remove red-tape so that teachers have more autonomy in the classroom and are empowered to properly execute their craft. In addition we need to ensure there is a robust pipeline of bright educators that are excited about the concept of transforming our babies into our future leaders.

Every teacher should have the resources and the training to succeed so our students have the opportunity to excel academically and personally. I am dedicated to working with teachers, administrators, and district leaders to see to it that educators are properly trained, developed, compensated, and honored for exceptional service to our children.

Aiding School Safety

Newark schoolchildren are the future of our city, and they deserve a safe environment to learn, and teachers need a safe environment to effectively teach if all students are to receive the best education possible. If children and teachers do not feel safe, they cannot concentrate on learning and educating. But safety goes beyond the classroom. Our children should not be at increased risk of exposure to violence as compared to children living and growing up in other communities.

Walking to school should not be an exercise in self-preservation; they should be able to do so without fear of victimization; their schools should be protected in a more vigorous way, and they should not have to contend with the daily lure and influence of gang and drug activity in and around their schools and neighborhoods. We must provide them with the option of saying no and alternatives to a life of crime, gang, and drug activity.
We as a city and, more importantly, as a community of parents must step up to meet the challenge and the time is now. In an effort to ensure our students have a safe educational experience, it is critical that we implement children safety zones for travel to and from schools and formulate more robust and better-coordinated school safety plans that focus on preventing school violence and mass casualty incidents, not just responding to them.

Improving school safety is not just strengthening internal school security measures and incident response protocols, but also target-hardening the school perimeter. We want to, as much as possible, confront and diffuse potential threats to our school children before they reach school buildings. We must develop an effective and multi-faceted approach to dealing with open air drug markets and gang activity in neighborhoods and around schools tying in prevention and intervention programs.

**As mayor, the safety of our children in Newark will be non-negotiable. If our schools are in disrepair, let's fix them; and if parents are angered with the problems plaguing our schools, let's work as a community to solve them.**

Together, I believe we can make our schools better and safer.

-Shavar Jeffries

**Reinvesting in Traditional Public Schools**

As chair of the Newark Public Schools Advisory Board, I led the board and the district in a lawsuit challenging the state’s $42 million cut to the district’s budget. As a result of our efforts, we were able to return $30 million in funding to our schools. It is critical that we ensure our schools are properly funded in order to guarantee that our children receive the world-class education they so rightly deserve.

-Shavar Jeffries

The people of Newark have the right to high-performing schools in every community in this city. While I strongly support the growth of high-performing public charter schools, I also believe that traditional public schools must be fully resourced to provide a first-rate education for every child that walks into the school building. Hand in hand with parental choice is the improvement of our neighborhood public schools.

It is critical that all children in Newark have access to a world-class education that will allow them to compete locally, nationally and globally. This can only be achieved by ensuring our neighborhood schools are properly equipped with the technology, best in
class educators and facilities to promote learning. As parents, we should continue to explore the concept of new school models in Newark such as Bard H.S. Early College, B.R.I.C.K. Academy, and Eagle Academy for Young Men, in order to strengthen traditional public education while pinpointing new practices that potentially can increase student achievement.

As mayor, I will pressure the School Development Authority (SDA) to focus on Newark and make existing projects such as West Side High School a priority. For decades, Newark students have attended school in buildings that are among the oldest, most obsolete and dangerous in New Jersey, if not the nation. If New Yorkers are to compete globally, our city needs more modern school facilities so our children can learn using the latest technology of the 21st century.

We have an inordinate amount of schools that are falling apart, neglected and not properly maintained. In fact, some of our schools were constructed during the Civil War Era. Our children need the proper environment to facilitate learning, which includes new or upgraded facilities, modern technology and green space.

We need to utilize our school assets in a manner that serves all of Newark’s children.

As mayor, I will support co-location for both district and charter schools because (1) it is good policy for charter schools because it provides needed space for Newark schoolchildren to learn and (2) for district schools because renting unused space helps to fill budget gaps in our system. As a city, we cannot allow some children to learn in trailers because their schools are overcrowded while others learn in near empty buildings.

Lastly, I will continue to fight on behalf of our special education learners as I have in the past while working with the Education Law Center. As mayor, I will work with school leaders to ensure that IEPs are efficiently and accurately completed for children that need them, and I will also work to create a culture in schools that does not discriminate against young people by over classifying our children.

Expanding After – School Programs and Extended Learning Time

I support the development of better after school programs in the city of Newark. Positive after school activities add essential enrichment to the academic experience of students and extend the connection of the community to our schools.

Learning must continue even after the last school bell rings. Through after school programs, our students learn the importance of partnering with others and working in the community. The social development of our children is key as they grow and mature into responsible adults who contribute to the city of Newark’s future.

I am committed to partnering with stakeholders across the community to develop after
school programs that provide the opportunity for enrichment and wraparound services for all children. During my tenure as chair, I successfully oversaw the expansion of the school day at over 20 Newark schools. As mayor, I will continue to push for extended learning time in our schools because learning must extend beyond the classroom.

Effective after-school and summer recreational and developmental programs are vital to steering our young people in a positive direction. We will prioritize investments in effective, proven programs that engage children either in extended learning time settings (where schools extend their learning day to provide either additional academic or extra-curricular programs) or through programs running parallel or in partnership with public schools, both district and charter.

Ensuring Parental Choice

As mayor, I will fight to ensure that parents are the decision-makers when it comes to their children’s education, and that the choices available to parents are high quality and equitable for all students in our city. I support parental choice for Newarkers. As a parent, you should not be forced to accept failure when it comes to the education of your child. Whether it’s a traditional district school or a public charter school, children deserve excellent schools, and parents should have the right to choose what’s best for their children.

The reality is that of the more than 40,000 school-aged children in Newark, approximately 9,000 students attend public charter schools in our city. In addition, Newark parents have exercised their voice and demanded expanded school options by signing up nearly 10,000 of their children on charter school waiting lists. As mayor, I will not ignore the voice of the people when it comes to education or any issue effecting Newarkers.
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