

*Every Child, Every School, Every Day... Making Equity a Reality*

# A Strategic Process *for Creating a Quality School in Every Neighborhood*



Photo by Will Parson



**San Diego Unified**  
SCHOOL DISTRICT

[www.sandi.net](http://www.sandi.net)

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## Executive Summary

The San Diego Unified School District provides an education to more than 117,000 students from pre-school to high school at more than 180 schools throughout the City of San Diego. In 2009, the Board of Education adopted the **Vision 2020 for Student Success**. This Vision outlines five areas that are critical to give the third graders in 2011 an opportunity for future success at the time of their high school graduation in the year 2020.



**Vision 2020** provides a broad outline for district goals to create quality schools in every neighborhood in the following areas:

- Focus on Student Achievement
- Schools as Neighborhood Learning Centers
- Parents and Volunteers Engaged with Learning
- Effective Teachers in Active Learning Communities
- A Supportive District

In early 2011, the Board of Education directed the superintendent to initiate a process to translate the Vision 2020 into a collaborative plan to create a quality school in every neighborhood.

This **Strategic Process** is intended to be more than just another plan that will sit on shelves and computers throughout the district. The choice of the word “Process” is intentional and is meant to convey action, direction and movement rather than just a passive plan for the future.

What follows in the Strategic Process is a guideline for implementing research-based strategies that will provide for continuous improvement of our schools during the next five years. The overarching goal of the process is to identify successful schools where collaborative community based strategies are working to increase student achievement and then bring those strategies to all schools in the district.

We must create a shared sense of urgency to expand and transfer the research-based strategies that are working for students in some schools to all schools in the district. This Strategic Process seeks to build on the collaborative learning teams that are succeeding in many of our schools to transform and improve student learning in all of our schools, rather than imposing the latest popular school reform strategy from the top.

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### Process:

1. a systematic series of actions directed to some end.
2. a continuous action, operation, or series of changes taking place in a definite manner

Dictionary.com

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### The Challenge

The Board of Education has challenged us all to achieve the goal of creating a quality school in every neighborhood throughout the district within five years.



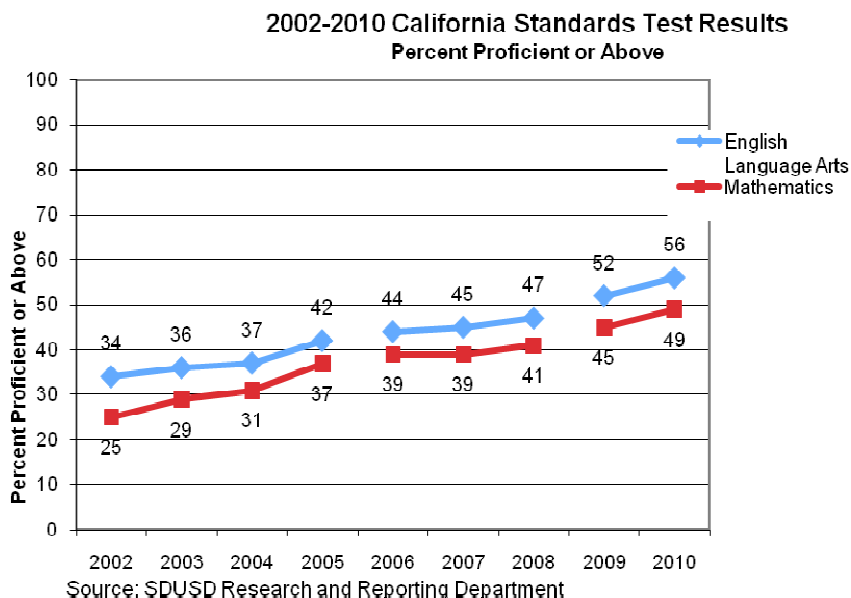
For the last two decades, San Diego Unified has attempted to provide equity and equal access to education by creating magnet schools, school choice and access to bus transportation to move students from their neighborhoods to schools throughout the district. As a result, after more than two decades, the district has achieved disappointing academic results for its economically disadvantaged and students of color. In addition, the district now has a disconnected system of neighborhood schools and themed schools served by an expensive transportation system.

As part of Vision 2020 and in response to community input, the Board of Education has challenged district leadership to create a new vision for the district where all neighborhood schools offer quality education and the need for busing students to schools outside their neighborhood can be reduced.

### Achievement Gap Data

**San Diego Unified has made consistent gains over the last five years in student achievement overall.** These gains have been the result of focused leadership at school sites in the midst of superintendent turnover and budget reductions.

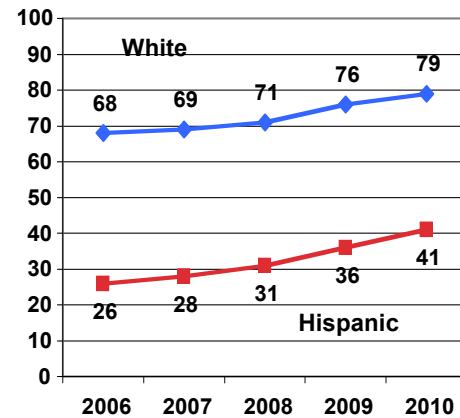
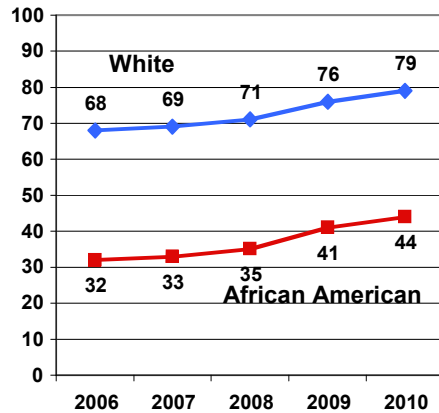
Overall student achievement in the district has climbed significantly since 2002 as shown in this chart.



### Achievement Gap Data Tells Another Story

This overall achievement data, however, fails to tell the complete picture. Looking at student sub-groups, the achievement picture is different with a persistent achievement gap over time.

**California Standards Test** English Language Arts  
Grades 2-11 Percentage of Students At Proficient or Advanced



Similar gaps in achievement persist between economically disadvantaged students and students above poverty levels. Persistent achievement gaps also exist in Math and Science scores.

### Attendance Market Share Data

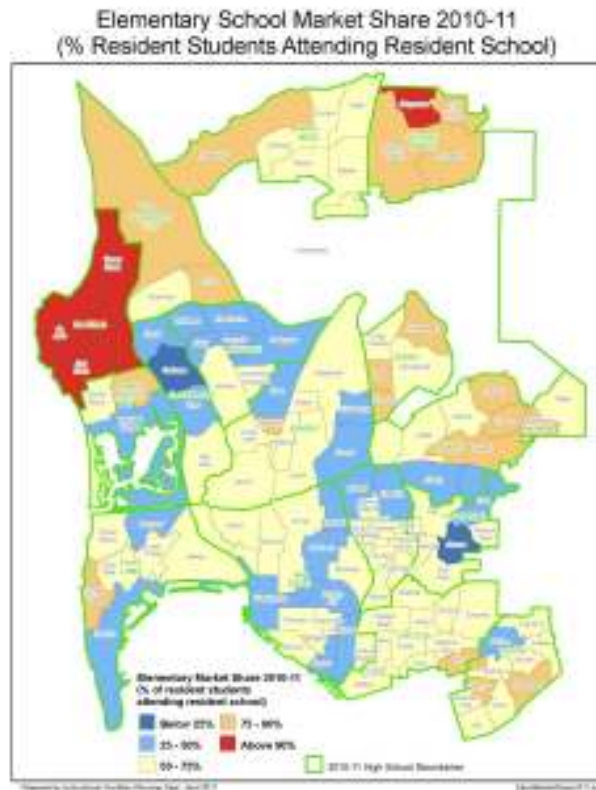
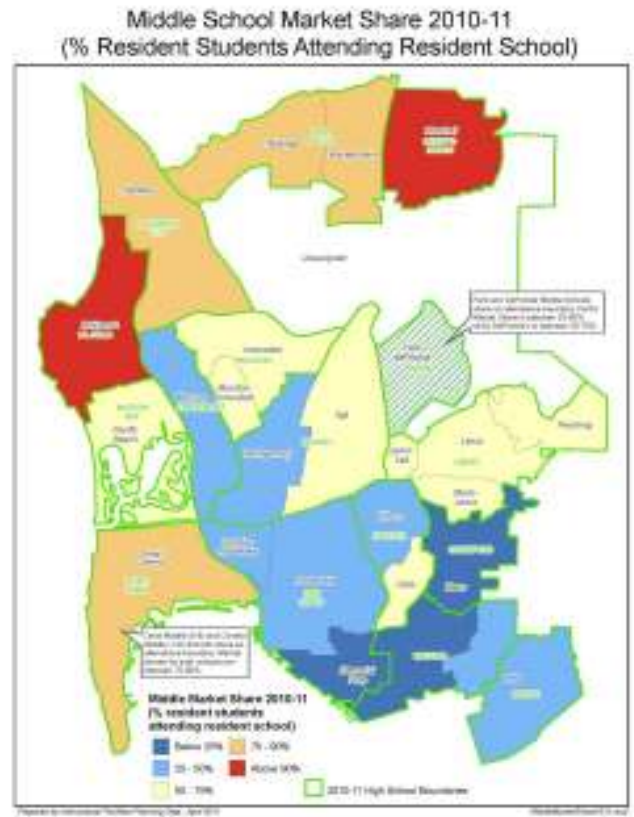
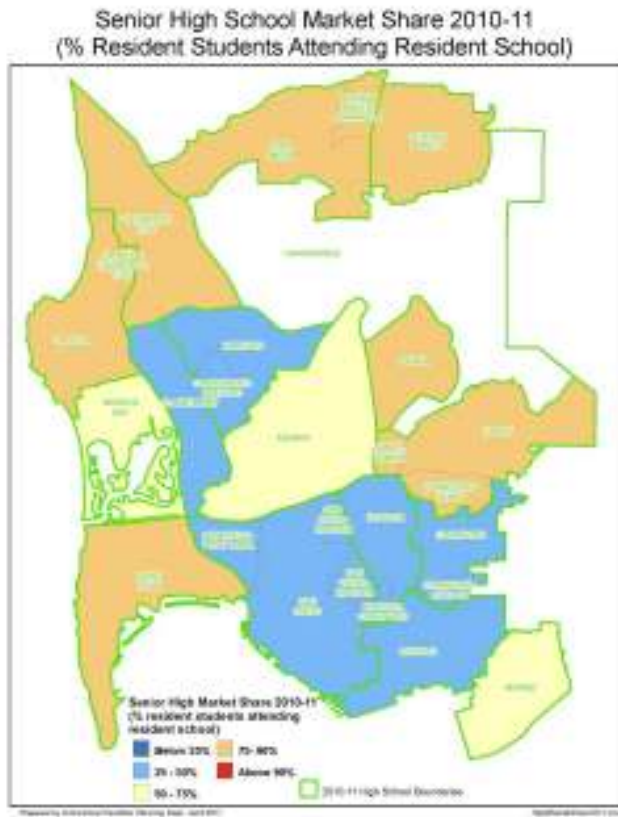
Today, the enrollment patterns for San Diego Unified schools tell another dramatic story. Schools south of I-8 and Clairemont and Linda Vista areas have a far lower percentage of students attending neighborhood schools than schools in the northern and western areas of the district. This is especially true for middle and high school students.

The correlation of this school market share data with poverty neighborhoods is especially disturbing since the data indicates the students from poorer neighborhoods are far more likely to be bused away from their neighborhood schools.

In addition, this situation has contributed to the district needing a bus transportation system that in 2008 costs more than \$40 million to operate. With the budget cuts in the last two years, those costs have been reduced but reductions in transportation have not been coordinated with a focus on school capacities, enrollment impacts and academic improvements to neighborhood schools.



The school attendance maps below tell this dramatic story.



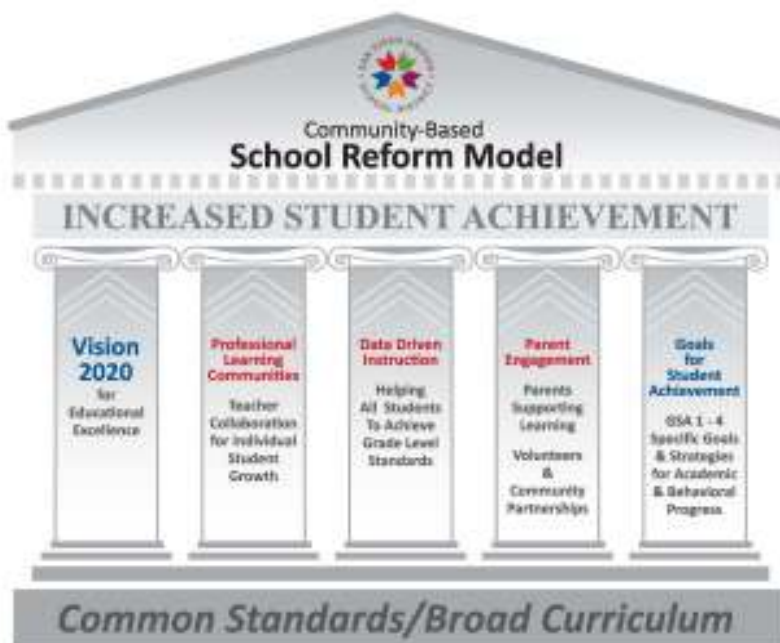
### Doing MORE of What We Know Works

Another important part of the student achievement story at San Diego Unified is only revealed when the achievement gains of individual schools are examined. **By the 2009/10 school year, San Diego Unified had 86 schools with an Academic Performance Index (API) of 800 or above,** an increase of 27 schools from the level in 2007. And the story for API 900+ schools and Title I schools are similar as shown below:

	07/08	08/09	09/10
Number of Schools With an API Score of 900+	13	20	22
Number of Title I Schools With an API Score of 800+	31	47	59

There are many schools in the district that have economically disadvantaged student population, students of color and English Language Learners (ELL) that have also achieved significant gains in achievement.

Community-based reform is working at our schools throughout the district to yield achievement increases. In looking at successful achieving schools, the district believes that the “Pillars” shown below need to exist and be embraced by all staff at a school site:



The community-based reform model is based on proven research based strategies including those highlighted in the book “It’s Being Done” by Karen Chenoweth.

These are a few of the promising practices demonstrated in our schools that are showing significant growth in the achievement of all students:



- Consistent school-wide instruction
- Strong Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) working collectively to ensure quality instruction
- Teacher collaboration with a laser-like focus on using data to differentiate instruction
- Implementation of Response to Instruction and Intervention (RTI2) strategies to support student learning
- Strong professional learning communities
- Strong AVID program to support student learning
- Use of common formative assessments that are developed and modified by teachers

In her book, Chenoweth also identifies qualities of teachers, principals and schools where progress is made to boost student achievement

- They teach their students
- They don't teach to the state tests
- They have high expectations for their students
- They know what the stakes are
- They embrace and use data
- They use data to measure individual student progress
- They constantly reexamine what they do
- They make decisions based on kids not adults
- They use time wisely
- They include all staff in the educational mission of the school Principals are a constant message
- Schools that are a nice place to work

Rather than deploying a new model of school reform, this Strategic Process will seek to take these characteristics of successful teaching and school leadership to transform teaching and learning throughout the district, achieving the overall goal of creating a quality school in every neighborhood.



## The Process for Creating a Quality School in Every Neighborhood

We know what is working for student achievement in our district and we know where achievement gains are being realized for our students. The challenge of this *Strategic Process* is to outline a series of continuous actions that can translate what is working for students at some schools to be in place at all schools throughout the district over the next five years.

This Process begins with a **Statement of Purpose** that supports excellence and equity on all schools:

***It is a moral imperative to raise achievement levels for all students and to close achievement gaps by creating conditions that will reverse racial and economic disparity in student achievement.***

Translating this statement of purpose in to actions is the goal of this continuous strategic process. This can be done by embracing the community-based school reform model initiated by the district in the 2010/11 school year.

The foundation of community based school reform is a matter of social justice where every child graduates from high school ready for college or a twenty-first century career. By collaborating with internal and external stakeholders, the district will ensure excellence throughout every school and success for every student.

### What is a “Quality School?”

The fundamental purpose of creating quality schools is to move San Diego Unified and all schools out of the Program Improvement status. To move this process forward, we must recognize that every school is unique in its culture, its student characteristics and in its location and physical elements. **But what is not unique is the moral imperative we all must share to offer equity and equal access to the elements of a quality education for all children.**

There are many models in educational literature about what makes a quality schools. Most of these models are consistent and most share the elements shown in this graphic:



## A Quality School in Every Neighborhood



This graphic depicts a quality school as a wheel encompassed by 12 indicators. The center of the wheel identifies four key indicators that must be present to boost student achievement. The outer wheel are eight additional indicators that support the work of the inner wheel and which also must be present for a school to attain the highest levels of achievement for its students.



The 12 indicators are outlined in more detail below to provide a guide to our goals for this process:

Quality School Indicators:	Strategies
<p><b>1. Quality Teaching and Data Driven Instruction</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selection process that attracts quality teachers that mirror student demographics</li> <li>• Stability of staff</li> <li>• Teaching flexibility within parameters</li> <li>• Accountability for outcomes</li> <li>• Use of best practices and data in instruction, benchmarks</li> <li>• Use of interventions to support instruction and behavior</li> <li>• Differentiated instruction</li> <li>• Frequent monitoring of student progress</li> <li>• Partnerships in teacher training with universities and county office</li> <li>• Teacher home visits/parent engagement</li> <li>• GSA 2, 3,4 implemented at all schools</li> <li>• Teacher collaboration</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Quality Leadership</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared leadership that fosters equity</li> <li>• Learning communities support</li> <li>• Instructional leadership teams</li> <li>• Ethical leadership</li> <li>• Plan for leadership development</li> <li>• Recruitment process to select strong principal leaders</li> <li>• Shared accountability and support</li> <li>• Mentoring/Support by Area Superintendent</li> <li>• Administrator training partnerships with colleges</li> <li>• Strong parent engagement</li> <li>• Integral part of district “team” and goals.</li> <li>• Principal mentorship program</li> <li>• Leaders of cycle of continuous improvement</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Professional learning for all staff</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional learning plans</li> <li>• Focused professional development around areas of need</li> <li>• Allocation of resources aligned with achievement goals</li> <li>• Grounded to student data</li> <li>• Learning team sharing, job embedded</li> <li>• Develop teachers to assume leadership</li> <li>• District-wide leadership development</li> </ul>



<p><b>4. Access to broad and challenging curriculum</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• College and Career Readiness for All Students (A-G)</li> <li>• Common Core State Standards and Assessments</li> <li>• System of grade-level achievement milestones</li> <li>• Attendance goals</li> <li>• Cluster by cluster access and equity analysis</li> <li>• Accessibility of neighborhood schools</li> <li>• Access to AP/IB courses</li> <li>• Access to online options</li> <li>• What programs are needed in every cluster? special opportunities</li> <li>• STEM course access</li> </ul>
<p><b>5. High Expectations</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum that values rigor and relevance</li> <li>• Students given clear goals for achievement levels</li> <li>• Students motivated to achieve at high levels</li> <li>• Behavior and citizenship expectations for all students</li> <li>• Student participation and involvement at all grades</li> </ul>
<p><b>6. K-12 Integration and collaboration</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cluster role in budgeting</li> <li>• Lead cluster principals identified</li> <li>• Principal mentoring</li> <li>• Analysis of grade configurations with each cluster</li> <li>• Full academic program offered in every cluster</li> </ul>
<p><b>7. Supportive environment, safe and well maintained facilities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimum maintenance standards met</li> <li>• Food service quality</li> <li>• Adequate supervision</li> <li>• Positive school climate and culture</li> <li>• Campus security plans</li> <li>• All staff training in their roles in student achievement</li> <li>• Transportation network that supports quality schools</li> </ul>
<p><b>8. Quality support staff integrated and focused on student achievement</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All classified staff are clear about how they contribute</li> <li>• Welcome the involvement of all staff</li> <li>• Feedback and appreciation</li> <li>• Special programs for all staff participation re: attendance</li> </ul>



<p><b>9. Parents engagement around student achievement, community volunteers</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective site governance</li> <li>• Parents know what is expected for each grade level</li> <li>• Parents understand learning standards</li> <li>• Teachers connecting with all families before problems occur</li> <li>• Home connections made by teachers</li> <li>• Parent monitoring of student progress</li> <li>• Two way communication between home and school</li> <li>• Volunteer roles identified and welcomed</li> </ul>
<p><b>10. Accepting of all children regardless of circumstance, need or background</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff reflects the demographics of student population</li> <li>• Training for staff to understand and support of diversity</li> <li>• Overrepresentation in special education addressed</li> <li>• Cultural diversity training for staff and students</li> <li>• No harassment or bullying tolerated, LGBTQ acceptance</li> <li>• Reduction of expulsions, suspensions</li> </ul>
<p><b>11. Tools for learning, technology</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Real time information for parents on student achievement</li> <li>• Parents can access information about students</li> <li>• Technology training for families</li> <li>• I21 classrooms evolve and are sustainable</li> <li>• Reduce the technology use gap among students/parents/communities</li> </ul>
<p><b>12. Serves as neighborhood center with services depending on neighborhood needs</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cluster or school family liaisons with services in community</li> <li>• Bring service delivery into school sites</li> <li>• Partnerships with neighborhood agencies</li> <li>• Open to community use of school facilities</li> </ul>

### Strategic Process Development – Action Steps

The development of a draft action plan for this Strategic Process will occur during the summer of 2011. To begin the development of draft action steps, the superintendent will designate working groups responsible for developing the framework for each of the indicators of a quality school.

By August 2011, the working groups will:

- Describe the current situation/condition/problem to be addressed;
- Describe the goal/purpose/outcome/ideal expected in five years;



- Propose a sequence of high-level strategies to be accomplished during the five years (strategies that are essential, strategic, effective and creative); and
- Identify data to be collected and reported to monitor progress toward the expectation.

The working groups will strive to bring together diversity of perspectives and ideas from internal stakeholders in forming their recommendations. The recommendations will need to consider the probability of a “resource poor” environment during the next five year.

The superintendent and deputy superintendents for instruction and business will share the indicators of a Quality School with the principals and central office staff during the summer. The principals and staff will be encouraged to begin to use the indicators of a quality school and to begin to begin conversations about self-assessing their strengths and planning professional learning to promote continuous improvement.

In September, 2011, the superintendent will provide the Board with an update on the development of action steps for the Strategic Process at a Board workshop meeting. This meeting will outline the status of working group action step development and a more detailed plan for community outreach and engagement.

## Community Outreach

Beginning in September 2011, the superintendent will introduce the Strategic Process to wider internal and external audiences. The purpose of this initial outreach will be to promote deeper understanding of the direction for San Diego Unified, to help stakeholders “find a place” in the process, and to hear from stakeholders about their hopes for and questions about the process.

### Internal stakeholders

The superintendent will share the Strategic Process, including the recommendations of the working groups, with the administrators in August 2011. The deputy superintendents for instruction and business will organize to convene internal discussion groups to promote understanding about the process and recommendations and to explore ways that they can apply, adjust and achieve the recommendations over five years. The results from these discussions will be reported to the superintendent and included in the Board Workshop report in November.

### External stakeholders

Under the direction of the deputy superintendent, area superintendents will use the cluster structure to invite cluster community stakeholders to promote understanding about the Strategic Process and recommendations and discuss their hopes for and questions about the direction for San Diego Unified for the next five years. The superintendent and leadership staff will attend cluster group meetings during the fall of 2011 to engage in a conversation about the draft Strategic Process. The results from their discussions will be reported to the Board during the month of November 2011.



Additional stakeholder outreach will include presentations and conversations with district advisory groups. The Superintendent and the Board may also consider town hall meetings to expand the discussions to more stakeholders.

While it is the superintendent's intention to submit the Strategic Process and recommendations for action to the Board of Trustees for their approval in late-November, the process does not end at that point. Engagement of internal and external stakeholders in implementing and monitoring progress is part of the Strategic Process.

The work of creating quality schools will also be integrated into 2012/13 school Single Plans for Student Achievement and school budgets, and school-level discussion lead by the principal will include the community. The final result will be practical, doable, achievable, affordable, sustainable, sequenced and necessary actions that lead to a Quality School in every neighborhood.

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