

I write this op ed, as a Trenton taxpayer, great-grandfather of a Trenton student, advocate for public education and as a candidate for the Trenton Public School Board and not in my capacity as a board member or on behalf of the Trenton School Board. On November 5th, there will be elections for the Trenton School Board, and as the majority of folks really do not know or understand how the Trenton School Board is structured and functions, I thought I would share this information. Before we begin, the current candidates, Gerald Truehart (10 years), Deniece Johnson (3 years), and I (8 years) are each certified school board members, and the Trenton School Board is one of less than 30 in the entire state of nearly 600 school boards that are both a Certified and Master School Board. Our campaign motto, *Student Academic Growth, Safe Schools and Superior and Transparent Governance*.

The school board has a dual role: To represent the concerns of the citizens, taxpayers, and parents to the school administrators, and to represent the needs of the students and school district to the citizens, taxpayers, and parents of the community. The school board does not operate the district on a day-to-day basis; that is the job of the superintendent, who is the district's chief executive. Rather, the school board sets the policies, goals, and objectives for the district – and it holds the superintendent responsible for implementing the policies and achieving the goals. In other words, the School Board determines the “what” and the Superintendent determines the “how.”

There is President or Chair, and Vice President or Vice Chair of the School Board. The President is elected by a majority vote of the Board members. The Trenton School Board governs by committee: The Curriculum Committee, the HR Committee, the Operations Committee, the Facilities Committee, the Family And Community Engagement Committee (F.A.C.E.); and the Policy Committee. The Chair of each committee is chosen by the President of the School Board on an annual basis. Additionally, the Board President may establish adhoc committees and assign members as they see fit. The Board members must complete annual financial disclosures and mandatory training through the New Jersey School Boards. There is a code of ethics that must be adhered to as a Board member.

As we think about the continued efforts to drive transformation and student growth, based on the district's continued progress on the State's standardized testing, relying solely on standardized state tests to measure student performance, especially in urban school districts, is limiting and often unfair. While standardized tests can provide some data on academic achievement, they do not account for the various challenges and strengths of individual students, schools, and communities. Urban school districts often face unique issues such as high poverty rates, lack of resources, and socio-economic barriers that can negatively impact test scores but do not reflect the true abilities of the students or the quality of instruction.

Using multiple measures to assess student performance provides a more holistic and accurate picture of a student's abilities and progress. These measures could include:

- Formative assessments that give real-time feedback on student learning.
- Project-based learning assessments that evaluate critical thinking and problem-solving.
- Growth models that measure individual student progress over time, rather than just proficiency at a single point.

- Social-emotional skills assessments that measure things like resilience, collaboration, and adaptability.

By incorporating a broader range of metrics, urban school districts can better address their specific challenges, provide targeted support, and celebrate student successes that go beyond standardized test scores. This approach aligns more closely with the complexities of teaching and learning in diverse environments.

Our desire is to continue to support the district as it makes progress.

### **Goal 1: Student Achievement**

- Literacy: TPS has focused on improving literacy through pre-assessments, adopting new resources, and providing consistent instructional approaches across K-12.
- Resources: Ensured consistency in learning materials for English Language Arts and Mathematics for grades 1-12.
- Professional Development: Prioritized teacher development with a focus on instructional strategies, data analysis, and accountability over the past three years.
- Apple Initiative: Teachers and students are part of a 1:1 initiative, providing devices to enhance technology integration and 21st-century learning skills.

### **Goal 2: Family & Community Engagement**

- Health and Safety: Over 200 staff members trained in CPR and AED use in compliance with Janet's Law.
- Central Registration: Moved to a centralized, online registration process, registering over 2,000 students since May.
- Parent Empowerment Series: Workshops to build partnerships between schools and families, focusing on managing stress, understanding behavior, and setting limits.

### **Goal 3: Developing the Whole Child**

- Trauma-Informed Care: Shifted focus to understanding student behaviors, reducing suspensions, and expanding the New Jersey School Climate Improvement Survey to all schools.
- Safety: Enhanced security measures and emergency protocol training for all staff, including substitutes and unaffiliated programs.

### **Goal 4: Professional Development**

- Restorative Practices: Implemented restorative justice training for educators, counselors, and administrators to build relationships, resolve conflicts, and address harm within schools.

### **Goal 5: Finance/Facilities/Infrastructure**

- Facilities: Improvements in air quality, health, and safety in schools, alongside efforts to beautify campuses.
- Finance: Ensured student budgets align with district priorities.

The greatest service we can provide to the children of Trenton is to ensure they are prepared to be successful in their choice of college or career.