



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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LAMONT O. REPOLLET, Ed.D.
Commissioner

To: Roger Leon, Superintendent of Newark Public School District

From: Commissioner Lamont O. Repollet, Ed.D.

Date: May 30, 2019

Re: Newark Public School District's Transition to Local Control

Background:

The Newark Public School District's ("District") Transition Plan for the Return of Local Control ("Transition Plan") became effective on February 1, 2018 and is scheduled to extend for two years (January 31, 2020), pending successful implementation.

Following the two years, I will determine, and recommend to the State Board of Education, whether or not the District completed all activities and benchmarks required under the Transition Plan.

The District's progress under the Transition Plan is measured by the quantitative metrics on the Accountability Scorecard and by the qualitative observations and input of the Highly Skilled Professional ("HSP"), Ms. Anzella Nelms, who I appointed to assist the District in the implementation of the Transition Plan.

The Comprehensive Accountability Office's Report:

The quantitative metrics are outlined on an Accountability Scorecard ("Scorecard"), which is complementary to the NJQSAC process, and address the following areas: Fundamental Considerations; Governance; Instruction and Program; Fiscal Management; and, Personnel. As required by the Transition Plan, the Department partnered with an independent entity (the Bloustein Local Government Research Center of Rutgers University) to form a Comprehensive Accountability Office ("CAO") with the capacity to collect and publish data regarding whether the District is making "substantial and sustainable" progress on the quantitative metrics.

The CAO developed a scoring scale that ranges from "not implemented" (1 point, the lowest score per metric) to "fully implemented" (4 points, the highest score per metric), with an additional option of "not applicable." The Scorecard has 23 metrics (12 metrics with 1 part, 4 metrics with 2 parts, and 1 metric with 3 parts). Of the 23 metrics, 3 metrics were not applicable, at this time (e.g., the board's evaluation of the superintendent is not due until June 30, 2019). Of the remaining 20 metrics, 12 were fully implemented,

7 are being substantially met, and 1 is being partially implemented. The CAO's justification for the metrics scored as substantially met and partially implemented is that it is premature to make a sustainability judgment. The District has the potential to fully implement these metrics and increase its scores; the CAO will re-assess these metrics following further observations by the HSP.

Below are the metrics that the CAO determined that the District has fully implemented.

- **Fully Implemented Metrics**

- The Board adheres to the conflict of interest laws and nepotism policy in making personnel decisions.
- All ethics training are completed on time by a quorum of the board members.
- All ethics training are completed by each member of the full BOE within 1 month of the deadline.
- The superintendent search met all 5 requirements described in the Transition Plan.
- The Board and the superintendent search committee substantially met the deadlines in the Transition Plan.
- The Board and the District adhere to all requirements regarding the student enrollment described in the Transition Plan.
- The District calculated and submitted a data analysis for the Instruction & Program QSAC Indicator.
- All professional development trainings are completed on time by a quorum of the board members.
- All professional development trainings are completed by each member of the full Board within 1 month of the deadline.
- The District prepares a balanced annual budget.
- The Board Secretary's monthly report is completed and reconciled.
- The District presents a fiscal forecast three times a year.
- The District, at least monthly, prepares and analyzes a fiscal year cash flow management for all funds, all payments are made on a prompt basis, and reimbursement requests for federal grant awards are submitted on a timely basis.
- The District ends the year with no deficit balances and no line item over appropriated expenditures by more than 10% in the general fund, special revenue fund, capital projects fund, or debt service fund.

Although some of the above metrics do not need to be completed again (e.g., the superintendent search), some are ongoing requirements (e.g., adhering to the conflicts of interest laws and nepotism policy) that the HSP and CAO will continue to monitor.

The Highly Skilled Professional's Report:

The HSP's report is based on her observations and interactions with the District since February 2018. The report complements the CAO's report by providing anecdotal information and/or addressing sections of the Transition Plan that are not on the Scorecard. For example, the Transition Plan directs the District to develop a new strategic plan, which is not a metric on the Scorecard. In her report, the

HSP described the District's process in developing a new strategic plan, her participation in the process, and the community engagement and feedback. The HSP also provided updates in the areas of budget development, enrollment, instruction and program, fiscal management and operations, and personnel. These updates shared important data (e.g., the District's increase in average yearly attendance) and thorough summaries of the District's internal controls that support sustainability (e.g., budget reviews with individual principals that included, among other things, roster reviews, projected enrollment, and a review of expense accounts and extracurricular programs).

Conclusion:

It is significant to note that neither the CAO nor the HSP identified any concerns with the District's implementation of the Transition Plan.