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## LOCAL CONTROL TRANSITION MEETING NOVEMBER 1, 2017 CONSOLIDATED NOTES

**November 13, 2017**

*Prepared by Ronald Chaluisan, Executive Director Newark Trust for Education*

On November 1, 2017 Newark Public Schools, in collaboration with the City of Newark and the Newark Trust for Education, hosted concurrent forums in each of the five wards across the city to gather community input for the transition plan required by the state as Newark completes the process of regaining local control of its schools. Approximately 350 residents attended the these sessions.

Each session was led by an Assistant Superintendent. The program included pre-recorded messages from Mayor Ras Baraka and Superintendent Christopher Cerf, a slide presentation of the key milestones to date in the city's return to local control, and an opportunity for community members to provide feedback to the District and the Board on one of the following questions:

*What are some expectations you have for board members' ethical behavior during and after this transition? What are some examples of how their ethical behavior might look in practice?*

*What are some of the criteria for the superintendent search process that you would like to be included in the plan to select a new superintendent?*

*What are some of the things you think are important for the school board and district to consider as they prepare to collaborate with each other - and the larger Newark community - going forward in this new era of local control?*

Attached is a synopsis of the notes captured during the residents' discussions at each of the tables.

Question #1: What are some expectations you have for board members' ethical behavior during and after this transition? What are some examples of how their ethical behavior might look in practice?

***The overall sentiment from the notes that were collected is that clear expectations need to be set and codified regarding the ethical behavior of all board members and district employees. Regular training should be required. Checks and balances need to be established, and mechanisms to hear and act on complaints must be put in place.***

- Establish clear set of criteria for serving as a board member
- Make clear who evaluates school board members/Newark public school district personnel
- Establish a culture of respect, transparency, trust, honesty and accountability
- Board appoints an ethics officer responsible for receiving complaints and investigating.
- Board members attend annual training on ethics.
- Board members review voting policies to ensure integrity.
- Create a commission on Board ethics
- Name an internal auditor for ethics
- Establish clear definition of and policy on conflict of interest
- Establish a clear set of rules regarding nepotism
- Board members should be asked to sign that in accepting the position as school board member they are committing to represent Newark Public Schools and no other
  - Position should be focused on interest of children and not on politics
- Make public and easily accessible the by-laws of the board
- Strive for diverse representation on the board
- Consider structured representation for the board

Question #2: What are some of the criteria for the superintendent search process that you would like to be included in the plan to select a new superintendent?

***Generally, participants are interested in playing an active role in the selection process for the new superintendent; from having input in determining the search firm to creating criteria, reviewing qualifications and making final recommendations.***

***There is a desire to establish and use a competency model, not to rush the process, to identify an educator with experience, and to ensure there is local representation in the pool of candidates.***

Identify and hire a search firm with community input and agreement

Process should be designed on a six-month timeline

Firm should

- commit to using a competency model for selection process
- establish a selection committee that has members with business experience, educators, and parents

- design a city-wide process to collect community recommendations on components of the competency model/selection rubric (forums, focus groups, and surveys)
- recruit nationally and locally
- design a city-wide process for feedback on candidates
  - Explore possibility of electronic feedback/voting/ranking of candidates by community members
    - establish process for reviewing this data
  - candidate resumes should be shared
  - process should determine a sub-group of approximately 10 candidates
    - Board members should visit candidate's current district/schools
    - Candidates should visit schools in each of the wards
  - sub-group weaned down to group of four
  - final candidate selected

Candidate should:

- demonstrate local understanding
  - commit to integrating elements of the current strategic plan for moving forward
  - commit to town hall/community engagement
- commit to drawing from the needs of the community (students, educators, families) to develop a clear vision for district that reflects diverse communities and special populations (early education, students with IEPs, English language learners)
- commit to accountability and transparency on fiscal and spending decisions, including a focus on educator training and dollars reaching the classroom.
- have a history of success
- show evidence of experience:
  - in urban education
  - teaching effectively
  - in school leadership
  - as a superintendent
  - managing change
  - with charter and district
  - with politics
  - building relationships
- have been educated in NPS/be local/from Newark/have Newark roots

Question #3: What are some of the things you think are important for the school board and district to consider as they prepare to collaborate with each other - and the larger Newark community - going forward in this new era of local control?

***Residents shared many ideas on areas of collaboration as Newark finalizes its move back to local control. All shared the need for mutual respect and shared accountability. First and foremost among respondents is the desire to see more effective forums for parental participation and input into the ongoing evolution of Newark's public schools. Participants voiced a need for a broader communication plan that uses technology to effectively improve knowledge about the system and increase levels of***

***input in various areas including, but not limited to, operations, curriculum, instruction and culture. Also, participants expressed a desire to be part of the goal setting process for the district.***

Collaborate on creating conditions for respect and mutual accountability

Involve parents/family and community members in the creation and implementation of the transition plan

- commit to transparency
- include experts
- gather, review and include pertinent data in regular communications
  - number of seats available for K and pre-K
  - re students with IEPs
  - universal enrollment
  - mental health access
- Establish coordinators or “ambassadors” to collect information from families across communities and share information with district and school board
  - health
  - physical plant
  - pollution (lead in water)
- Be sensitive and plan for language needs of residents

Establish and maintain a Culture of inclusion

- Intentionally work to shift narrative that district parents are not caring/stop marginalizing district school parents
- Identify opportunities to and follow up work to engage additional community members/organizations/parents in the work of schools and the district
- Establish conditions for effective school leadership councils
- Clearly articulate where parents can be decision-makers and process for parents to engage in the decision-making process
  - Establish conditions that allow for flexibility, patience, and open-mindedness
  - Parent/guardian training on what to expect and how best to participate
  - Establish a process to integrate parent voice in:
    - determining essential programming for schools including
      - core content/culturally relevant curriculum
      - arts
      - home economics
      - special education
      - career and technical education
      - socio-emotional components (including an audit of what is in place already)
    - the budget process
    - hiring teachers
    - the meal planning process
- Determine process and partnerships that allow for outreach, training, and recruitment of local residents as teachers and school/district staff

- Engage parents as partners in the process of strengthening neighborhood and community schools to ensure a local, quality, public education
- Create mechanism for city and community partners to work with the school district to address non-school issues that create barriers to learning.
- Be sensitive and plan for the language needs of families
- Consider Board Meetings in the various wards to spur broader participation

#### Engage in Collaborative Goal Setting

- process to prioritize community needs including issues re transportation,
- process to set common agenda
- process to assess progress including mutually agreed upon rubrics and consistent updates and follow up
- process to determine the viability of re-hiring positions previously in place in the district
- establishment of a timeline to meet goals

#### Establish and Maintain Systems for Effective Communications

- explore different ways to gather residents and collect input including technology based solutions
- create opportunities for community members to have a clear understanding of what local control is and isn't
- all sides must be heard, all voices are important, including parents and students
- established norms and protocols
- consistent meetings and follow up
- multiple channels through which to communicate
- transparency at all levels
- regular updates on process of return to local control

#### Establish and maintain a child focus in determining policy and support

Clarify if restorative justice principles will be continued to be implemented at every level of the system

Establish process for reviewing and determining the future of universal enrollment and the enrollment centers

Explore the possibility of more community school approaches including how to provide resources, classes for adults, etc.

Explore possibility of providing additional supports in classrooms