



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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CHRIS CHRISTIE
Governor

KIM GUADAGNO
Lt. Governor

DAVID C. HESPE
Commissioner

August 1, 2016

Mr. Christopher Cerf
State District Superintendent
Newark School District
2 Cedar Street
Newark, NJ 07102-3015

Dear Superintendent Cerf:

On the basis of the positive trend reflected in the results of the most recent Quality Single Accountability Continuum (QSAC) district performance review, I wish to provide an update on the status of local control in the Newark Public Schools District. When determining whether to recommend withdrawal from intervention in a district, the Commissioner shall consider whether the district has demonstrated evidence of substantial and sustained progress and whether there is substantial evidence that the district has the adequate programs, policies, and personnel in place and in operation to ensure that demonstrated progress is sustained. N.J.A.C. 6A:30-7.1(b)

The Newark Public Schools District has had local control of Operations and Fiscal Management since October 2007 and June 2014, respectively.

In the most recent (7/2016) evaluation, the district scored 100% in Personnel, demonstrating its ability to sustain the substantial progress achieved to date, and showing evidence of adequate programs, policies, and personnel in place and in operation. As a result, I am recommending to the State Board of Education that this area be returned to local control. As outlined in N.J.S.A. 18A:7A-49, the Department will work closely with the district to develop a plan to transition Personnel to local oversight by the School Advisory Board. The district will collaborate with the School Advisory Board to successfully transition this area and build capacity among the current members.

The QSAC score for Instruction and Program remains below the minimum requirement of 80%. Notwithstanding this challenge, the district has made considerable gains in its use of technology to support all learners and has made progress in student achievement, as evidenced by both test scores and overall graduation rates. While the district has not met the absolute benchmarks set forth in QSAC, I believe a solid foundation has been established. As a result, the equivalency application that the district has submitted with proposed quality

performance indicators for Instruction and Program has been approved, and the equivalent indicators outlined in the application will be used to assess the district's student achievement starting in the 2016-17 school year. These equivalent indicators are consistent with best practices in education and are aligned with the Department's focus on growth metrics as part of a continual improvement process. The district must address its continuing efforts to improve student achievement in its District Improvement Plan, as aligned with the approved equivalent metrics and goals, and the Department of Education stands ready to support the district in this effort.

The Department also recognizes recent progress that the district has made in Governance. The district has addressed gaps in transparency with Board minutes and has made progress with aligning its budget and strategic priorities. While these efforts are encouraging, the district must maintain the improvements made in the previous budget cycle throughout the 2016-17 school year to demonstrate its capacity for sustainability, and at that point the Department will recommend the return of Governance for the 2017-18 school year.

We look forward to working with you in your improvement efforts. The Department will conduct a QSAC review at the end of the 2016-17 school year, and as indicated above, the results of this review will determine the status of the final two areas (Governance, Instruction and Program).

Sincerely,

David C. Hespe
Commissioner

DCH/CS

c: Robert Bumpus
Joseph Zarra