

New Jersey Department of Education

Newark Public Schools

Transition Plan for the Return of Local Control to Newark Public Schools

Final Report

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Please note that this report has been modified from its original version to be more accessible.

Acknowledgments

The Highly Skilled Professional assigned to the Newark Public Schools has so many people to thank who contributed to this transition of Newark to full local control. All of them believed that Newark could meet the benchmarks delineated in the Transition Plan and provided their full cooperation and expertise in ensuring this occurred.

First, I would like to thank the prior Commissioner and the current Commissioner and the staff who report to them, along with the State Board and the Newark Public Schools Board for believing in the HSP appointee to Newark.

Second, I thank the Interim Superintendent, Robert Gregory, and the Successor Superintendent, Roger Leon. Mr. Gregory, in his five months, worked with the HSP to ensure that benchmarks covering February 1, 2018 through June 2018 were met. Superintendent Roger Leon's appointment as the permanent superintendent brought a heightened recognition of the importance of the process and the need to do whatever it took to ensure that Newark returned to Local Control. He walked every mile with the HSP and was intricately involved in the process.

Third, I thank every member of the Executive Staff and other staff members in the Newark Public Schools who worked diligently and provided documentation, data, and reports that allowed the district to receive the scores in all three CAO reports. None of this could have happened without your dedication and willingness to move the district forward.

Fourth, I thank the Mayor, parents and community who fought the long fight that allowed Newark to reach this point.

Fifth, I thank the student leaders in Newark who advocated and protested for the return of local control. Their voices could be considered the strongest since this entire process is about them and their future.

Finally, I thank the clerical staff in the Superintendent's and Deputy Superintendent's offices for the long hours spent with me in the organization of the many documents submitted to my office.

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New Jersey Department of Education/Newark Public Schools

Two-Year Report on The Transition Plan for The Return of Local Control to Newark Public Schools

Historical Perspective/Overview

Monitoring of schools, beginning in 1984, when the state Department of Education began measuring schools against state and federal standards, allowed those who met the standards to be certified, while those that did not meet the standards were required to create corrective action plans. Additional reviews by the state in 1992 were to “provide recommendations for future actions” as quoted in the Star Ledger by the assistant commissioner at that time. In May 2019, in a timeline included in an article “*22 years of Control over Newark Schools: A Timeline*” by Steve Strunsky, NJ Advance Media for NJ.com, he reports the state released a report in May 1993 that found the district struggling “under the weight of poor performance on the part of many students, ...neglected facilities, ... charges of mismanagement... .” During that same month, Education Commissioner Mary Lee Fitzgerald appointed an “auditor general” to the district who had power to block major school board expenditures.

The final step before a state takeover, the Comprehensive Compliance Investigation (CCI) began in May 1993. In July 1994, Education Commissioner Leo Klagholz announced the results of the CCI and the state’s decision to take over the district. The 1,700 page report cited more than 100 charges against the school district.

Judge Stephen G. Weiss, in April 1995, recommended the immediate state takeover of the district. Weiss said in his decision, “The state cannot continue to stand aside for another year ... while the school system in its largest city continues demonstrably to deteriorate” (Steve Strunsky).

In July 1995, on the twelfth day, a team of individuals from the state arrived at the district office and declared that the district was under state control. On July 17, 1995, Beverly Hall became the first state-appointed superintendent. On February 1, 2018, the transition to full control began in Newark, 23 years after the takeover.

The “Transition Plan for the Return of Local Control to Newark Public Schools (the PLAN)” articulated in its first sentence that “After more than two decades under full intervention by the State Department, the Newark Public Schools is being returned to local control.” This sentence set the tone for what was about to occur during this two year period of transition.

Once the state concluded the Newark Public Schools had made significant progress and had satisfied the regulatory requirements of Quality School Accountability Continuum (QSAC), the State Board voted to initiate the return of local control on September 13, 2017. A prerequisite was that the State and the District had to develop a transition plan which would “...outline the process when full voting authority and governance would be returned to the School Board.” The process is delineated in the Transition

Plan and is focused on the following considerations: Fundamental Considerations, Governance, Instruction and Program, Personnel, Fiscal Management and Operations. It is important to note that excluding Fundamental Considerations, the other five are QSAC areas.

Effective February 1, 2018, the transition for the return of local control officially began in Newark with the appointment of the Interim Superintendent, Robert Gregory, the constitution of the Advisory Board as the Board of Education and the arrival of the New Jersey Department of Education's appointed Highly Skilled Professional (HSP) to the Newark Public Schools. Pursuant to the Transition Plan, this appointment was made to allow for specific elements of monitoring and support to the District during the period of transition. The HSP was appointed by the Commissioner and reported to the Commissioner, while providing guidance and support to the District and Board in the implementation of the Plan. Many areas of responsibility were specifically outlined in the Plan. However, as is also stated in the Plan, the role of the HSP evolved as District needs were identified. The initial focus, supporting the District in executing personnel decisions in peak season, developing the budget and planning for the opening of school for the first time under local control were high priorities. Simultaneously, being involved in the process for the search for the successor superintendent and ensuring that the process was followed was also among the priorities between February through May. The HSP, however, was a former Assistant Superintendent before and during state takeover and also a former/retired NPS Deputy Superintendent, during state takeover, with strong ties to the District, respect for the work in the District, knowledge of the District and a desire to devote the time and commitment to this transition.

The Beginning Work

During the first five months, a working relationship with the Interim Superintendent, Robert Gregory, and his cabinet, Executive Director of Talent, the School Business Administrator and her staff, and Board Relations was developed. Most of the initial work occurred with individuals in these positions. Meetings were placed on the calendar with the HSP as an attendee. All meetings included the HSP in planning sessions, meetings with working groups, and Board Committee meetings. Dates of meetings scheduled for the Superintendent were placed on the HSP calendar. These scheduled sessions allowed the HSP to receive first-hand knowledge of any and all district priorities and provided the opportunity for input, advisement and recommended actions. Sessions also allowed the HSP to become familiar with the staff, their areas of responsibilities and be in a position to address concerns, and recommendations to the Interim Superintendent at scheduled one-on-one meetings.

With the many requirements of the Plan, it was important for the HSP to be thoroughly knowledgeable of the contents of the Plan, expectations, timelines, and required documentation that would later be needed. This necessitated a war room being set up that would serve as the one place where all information could be shared with others in the organization, outside the district and at the State level. A large replica of the Accountability Scorecard was placed on the wall and served as a visual reminder of the work to be completed. Other transition trackers were developed for the other sections in the Plan. These trackers allowed the HSP to track important dates, section of plan/activities, actions, and completion dates. With so many timelines, being organized was most important. Tracker 1 covered the period of February 1, 2018 – June 30, 2018. The first documentation that needed to be retrieved from

Board Relations was evidence that previously required training for Board members had occurred by February-March 2018, as mandated by the Plan. Areas of training to be completed by this timeline were:

- Conflict of Interest and Ethical Requirements
- Confidentiality of Information
- Roles of the Board compared to Administrative Responsibility
- Nepotism and Prohibited Political Contributions
- Governance Best Practices
- Effective Decision-making Processes
- Communicating with the Public During/Outside Board Meetings
- Development of Expertise in Areas (i.e. Personnel, Finance)
- Training in Financial Oversight, Accountability and Fiduciary Responsibility
- Financial Policies
- Expectations Regarding Effective Relationships with Leadership Team

Files from Board Relations were made available to the HSP. The first set of documentation that was requested were the individual training profiles from New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA) for each of the sitting Board members as of February 1, 2018. Members had taken all their required board training and additional training which contributed to their receiving the designation as a Master Board. Additionally, the District had acquired the services of consultants from outside of Newark who provided additional training from August 2016 through June 2018. As a result this scheduling, all of the areas above were documented as having been completed.

Recognizing that two required training sessions needed to be addressed before the end of SY 2017-2018, two sessions were planned in May 2018: “NJ Learning Standards and its Effect on Student Achievement” and “What is the Difference between Summative and Formative Data”. This training was provided at a Board Retreat by in-district staff and a curriculum consultant.

Selection of the Successor Superintendent

The most important task during the first five month period was the search for the Successor Superintendent. The search was national in scope and conducted by a reputable search firm that had experience running superintendent search processes for large urban districts. The firm selected was HYA Executive Search. The search committee convened for the first time on February 5, 2018 and met four times (Feb. 5, Feb. 26, March 19, and April 10). The committee included seven members: 3 Board members, 3 members with a clear and longstanding connection to Newark (selected by consensus by the Commissioner and Mayor), 1 state representative – selected by the Commissioner. The members were:

- Jennifer Carrillo-Perez (NJDOE appointee; former NPS Advisory Board Member 2001-2004; attorney)
- Marion A. Bolden (former NPS Superintendent)

- Irene Cooper-Basch (Executive Director, Victoria Foundation)
- Nancy Cantor (Chancellor, Rutgers-Newark)
- Josephine Garcia, Kim Gaddy, Leah Owens (NPS Board Members)
- Stanley Ferdinand (NJDOE, non-voting member; committee secretary)

Advertising for the Superintendent’s position was scheduled for February 13, 2018 and was opened through March 2, 2018. The search timeline included a District survey that allowed parents, staff, board members, citizens, students, and community groups to have input into the process and Focus Group meetings (including open Ward-Based meetings). Interviews were held on April 20-21 at the Board office in Newark. Three candidates were submitted to the Board as finalists with a fourth finalist added. At the “Meet the Candidates” held at Science Park High School on May 18, 2018, four candidates presented themselves to the public. Final Superintendent interviews were held at New Jersey Institute of Technology on Saturday, May 19, 2018. At the regular Board meeting on May 22, 2018, the candidate announced as the new Superintendent of the Newark Public Schools was Roger Leon.

As the transition work continued, the phase beginning July 1, 2018, commenced with the Successor Superintendent, Roger Leon. It was extremely important that there be no break in the momentum and that the District stay focused on the many activities and timelines that related to the withdrawal of State Intervention. While much attention was given to the requirements of the Accountability ScoreCard, the real work was ensuring that all expectations for all five Quality School Accountability Continuum (QSAC) areas (Governance, Instruction & Program, Personnel, Fiscal Management, and Operations) were satisfied. Superintendent Leon set the implementation of the Plan as a priority and communicated how he wanted to roll out the importance of the Plan. There was no barrier between the HSP and the Superintendent. His actions clearly communicated his trust in the HSP and the process and he opened doors to allow no obstacles to prevent the HSP from fulfilling the required duties. Superintendent Leon designated himself as the point person for this important task and paved the way for the following:

- Training sessions, jointly conducted by the Superintendent and HSP, with all central office heads and any other designated staff person from various offices at which PowerPoint presentations were presented. Each left the session/s with a copy of the PowerPoint (served as a resource) and a copy of the Accountability Scorecard.
- Large blow-ups of the Accountability Scorecard for each office.
- Presentations at Board meetings and Board retreats.
- Updates at Executive Staff meetings.
- Updates at Governance Committee meetings.
- Presentations/updates at Central Office and Principals meetings.
- HSP presence at Executive Staff meetings and other staff meetings.
- Participation in budget planning sessions and attendance at school budget hearings.
- Attendance at other strategic meetings.

The involvement of Superintendent Leon in the implementation of the Plan has definitely been a more hands-on approach during period from July 2018 – January 2020 and has thereby allowed a smooth, seamless implementation.

Following will be a summary of the work during the two-year period. It is important to be reminded that the Transition Plan had five sections to be addressed: Fundamental Considerations, Governance, Instruction and Programs, Fiscal Management and Operations, and Personnel. Detailed documents have been submitted to the Comprehensive Accountability Office to support the metrics needed to demonstrate compliance and adherence to all mandated areas on the Accountability Scorecard for the three required reports to the State Board.

Fundamental Considerations

Classification of the District

As is stated in the Transition Plan, “State law provides that a referendum on the classification of the board as Type I (appointed) or Type II (elected) be held within one year of meeting the performance criteria for Governance.” The public questions was prepared and was submitted for inclusion on the general election ballot for November 6, 2018. Newark voters overwhelmingly opted for Type II board (elected) with 78.7% (2,739) votes.

During this election period, the Newark Board of Education created a pathway to civic engagement in its attempt to educate students in what it means to be an engaged citizen in their community. The district’s partner in this work was The Citizens Campaign. Nearly 500 students registered to vote and thousands participated in *Civics in the Classroom*, with more than 3,000 students taking part in a mock vote on the Newark referendum on education. The initiative was the brainchild of Superintendent Leon who “... saw this as an opportunity to educate students in civic engagement through voter registration and education, classroom civics and student voting.” Students were registered with the assistance of the Rutgers Newark Campus - New Jersey Public Interest Research Group.

State Engagement with the District during the Transition

There were different levels of state engagement during the transition. The consistent engagement during the transition was provided by the Highly Skilled Professional. The HSP was in the district three days a week and arranged her schedule so that she attended board committee meetings, all business and regular board meetings, district level meetings, principals meetings, events, forums, and strategic planning meetings. She also had one-on-one meetings with department heads or other staff as needed to accomplish any part of the Transition Plan.

There were staff members from the Commissioner’s office who supported the HSP and served as a direct liaison from the Commissioner to the HSP. These individuals were able to seek out information needed, provide direct assistance and/or resources to the HSP and assist in problem solving. They also availed themselves to other district staff as needed. Weekly conference calls were held with these staff members and scheduled meetings were held. In addition, the Commissioner had one-on-ones with the HSP where he received updates and addressed any concerns either immediately or as a follow-up. He was also available by phone, email or texts.

Governance

Training for Board of Education Members and Senior Administrators

Beginning July 2018, the same types of training that occurred during the first five months were scheduled again for new board members and other sitting board members. Board Relations was instrumental in scheduling board members for the required training with New Jersey School Boards. Again, profiles were requested and monitored by both Board Relations and the HSP and all training for other areas, i.e. Ethics, Governance, Instruction and Programs, Fiscal and Personnel that had been planned and scheduled for the prior Board members were repeated for current Board and Senior Staff. It should be noted that Newark's Board members demonstrated that they were eager to be knowledgeable as demonstrated by the sessions each registered to take that were above and beyond the NJSBA mandated ones and their attendance at trainings scheduled by the District.

Board members and senior administrators were scheduled for sessions required by the Transition Plan. Training was provided to the Board members on how to communicate and respond during public comment about an individual under appropriate RICE notification procedures and on Donaldson hearings. This was done by in-district personnel and an external lawyer. More training was scheduled as needed on these topics and Board members demonstrated a strong desire to better understand these processes.

The District used the New Jersey School Boards Association to provide training to Board members and staff before and during the entire transition period. Others with expertise on various topics were scheduled to train. Board members and Senior Staff were trained on Ethics, Superintendent's Evaluation, Board Roles, Board/Superintendent Relationships, Governance Best Practices, Effective Decision-Making Processes, Board Finances, Budget Process, Revenue Sources, Financial Reports (Secretary's Report, Treasurer's Report), Financial Planning and Reporting, Personnel Issues for a Board, Overview of the Open Public Meetings Act, Discussions for Executive Session, Confidentiality. Additional training was held on Collective Negotiating, Instruction and Programs (NJ Learning Standards and Assessments). Board members are up to date on their required yearly trainings (i.e. Governance I, II, III etc.).

As newly elected Board members joined the board each year, New Board Orientation was held at the District office. Individuals seeking office were informed before elections of this mandatory training. Sessions included all areas of QSAC and additional topics as determined by the Superintendent, Board Relations, Legal and the HSP.

To date, the District continues to be in compliance with necessary training and board members are up to date on the mandated training with New Jersey School Boards. Individual board members recognized the importance of training to this process and at no time did the district have a concern about any member not adhering to training dates as required by NJSB or district training sessions.

Another area of Governance that was deemed a priority was good Boardmanship practices at Board committee meetings, with the priority committee meetings being Governance and Instruction and

Program, followed by Personnel and Finance. The committee meetings became the primary venue for discussion of concerns and resolution of issues. Board members have worked on their committee reports and have shortened presentations at the Business meetings. They adopted a template to be used for the recording of all committee minutes and recently started the practice of placing committee minutes on the district's website. Business meetings now look and sound differently from the public meetings and Board members continue to demonstrate growth in how they handle difficult situations.

Several Retreats and other mandated training sessions were planned for Board members and senior administrators. These various trainings occurred during the time period of 2018-2020. Many were facilitated by outside presenters, New Jersey School Boards, with in-district staff serving as presenters on relevant district topics. Documentation is available to support this training.

Two visits were made to two different types of districts in Essex County: one to an urban district, Irvington, New Jersey and the other to a suburban district, Millburn, New Jersey. Visits were planned to allow Board members to meet with fellow board members, ask questions, share experiences and observe the two districts' board meetings. These visits allowed Board members to make comparisons on how meetings were conducted and learn from the experiences.

Evaluating the Successor Superintendent

In preparation for the evaluation of the Superintendent, additional training was provided to the Board members on May 29, 2019 by New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA). At the session, the *Guide to the Chief School Administrator Evaluation Process* was provided by NJSBA and used as the training tool for Board members and Senior Staff. The process, as outlined in the document, was followed by the Superintendent and Board members:

- Written comments that offered targeted evidence to the Board to support the Superintendent's self-assessment rating of the achievement of the District goals. Documents were uploaded on the District's Google Drive and into the NJSBA drive, allowing each Board member to view the evidence on line.
- Board members each reviewed the documents compiled by the Superintendent for each standard and completed their ratings with supporting comments, where appropriate.
- NJSBA compiled the individual Board member responses into one document.
- Board members reviewed the compilation of all responses and determined the majority opinion from which the Annual Performance Report was developed.
- Special meeting advertised and held on July 1, 2019 where the Annual Summary Conference was held with Board members and Superintendent to discuss the Annual Performance Report.

For SY 2019-2020, Board members are receiving the training for preparation of the Superintendent's evaluation remotely. Documentation is being prepared for the Google Drive as was done last school year.

Strategic Planning Expectations

The District partnered with CREED to support the strategic planning process and district transformational needs. As is stated in the program work plan “a customized strategic planning process aligned with the Newark Public Schools vision ... including protocols to guide the strategic planning process, data collection instruments, agendas and activities, and meeting materials will be needs addressed by the organization.” The process was very transparent with initial sessions beginning with school principals, central office administration, and Board members. CREED also facilitated external stakeholder strategic planning conversations, meetings, work sessions, roundtables and community meetings, and district-wide student conference, in partnership with district leadership.

As part of the “NPS Clarity 2020” strategic planning process, community conversations were convened according to the feeder patterns of the comprehensive high schools. These meetings were held to engage parents, community members, Newark Board of Education (NBOE) staff, and students within the feeder pattern in the strategic planning process. Participants engaged in data analysis to identify root causes underlying attendance and academic achievement data and worked in groups to identify strategies to address identified root causes. Clarity 2020, the one year NPS strategic plan, has been implemented during the 2019-2020 school year.

The strategic planning process for “The Next Decade” began in September 2019. The process included the creation of the Strategic Planning Advisory Committee, Stakeholder Roundtables, NPS Equity Workgroup, NPS Mission and Vision Workgroup, and Core Values and Theory of Action Workgroup. Teachers, principals, students, parents, community leaders, local organizations, elected officials, and valued partners contributed their time, expertise, and ideas to the development of the strategic plan.

Seven (7) stakeholder groups participated in three meetings each, held from October 2019 through December 2019. The stakeholder groups were: Community, Early Childhood, Employees, Parents, Partners, Philanthropy, Special Education, Students, and Student Supports. There was an internal NPS convener and an external convener for each group and each group was responsible for the planning and development of each NPS Clarity 2020 priority. Protocols and materials for all of the roundtables and workgroups, including presentations and planning templates were developed. The output of each roundtable was analyzed using qualitative data analysis methods and is being used to develop the content for the strategic plan.

Enrollment

The Board and District adhered to all requirements and expectations around student enrollment described in the Plan during this transition period. The district continues to adhere to the principles set forth in the Newark Enrolls Memorandum of Understanding. In partnership with the participating LEA’s, the Newark Enrolls Universal Enrollment process operates under a common set of rules that maximizes school choice for families. With an improved platform, the system aims to optimize the equitable distribution of high-needs students across the participating LEA’s in Newark. Finally, the new platform makes significant improvements to the family experiences with a robust search tool that uses geocoding to help families find schools with academic programs and co-curricular activities of their choice.

In SY 2019-2020, adherence to the principles and expectations for managing a cohesive, unified strategy for enrollment was exemplified in the procurement and implementation of SchoolMint as the web-based student placement system for Newark Enrolls. In spring of 2019, the district solicited the market for a new platform that would solve technical challenges and enhance the overall experience for families and staff. The previous system simply served as an application portal; in short, it accepted applications. As such, it required families to know their school choices in advance and offered no details on the 70+ schools in the Newark Enrolls Universal Enrollment System. The previous system also lacked geocoding features that help families identify schools closest to their home. As a result, families would be burdened with MapQuest searches outside of the application platform to understand their options within or between geographic wards. Another major challenge with that system was that it required a laborious data validation process outside of the system before the lottery execution. Finally, the previous system was not equipped to receive applications through mobile phones and offered no preregistration process. All of these challenges have been solved with the SchoolMint platform.

After a thorough evaluation and RFP process, SchoolMint was determined to have the best parent experience, the most operationally effective administrative solution, and the most comprehensive approach to solving the enrollment challenges we were facing. The new system is user friendly, is based on contemporary technology, is accessible via multiple platforms including phones and mobile devices, and provides accurate reports tailored to the needs of Newark Enrolls.

Families can identify and learn about schools and programs that match their children's needs and interests. They can also identify their top 8 choices, mark them as favorites, then proceed seamlessly into SchoolMint's user friendly application process.

In the district's first year using the SchoolMint platform, Newark Enrolls received more applications on the first day of the open enrollment window than typically received. Within 38 minutes of the platform's launch, 573 applications were submitted and within 2 hours of the launch 1,075 applications were submitted. At the close of the window, a total 12,255 applications were submitted.

The Newark Enrolls administrative team is now able to send data from the SchoolMint platform with the click of a button and remove the countless hours of manual work that data managers would historically spend updating this information. Automation with SchoolMint also meant no longer having to manually input or re-enter application data into PowerSchool. Unlike the previous system, SchoolMint is fully compatible with the student data bases in the district and across on LEAs.

Since the start of the school year, the district held several meetings with the LEAs in preparation for the Newark Enrolls process. These meetings were whole group or one-on-one on the following dates: July 18; August 9, 16, and 30; September 10, 20, 23, 25, and 27; October 28; November 22, 25; (2019) January 23, 31; April 3, 6, and 9, (2020).

The following LEAs participated with the district in Newark Enrolls for next school year:

Brick Education Network, Great Oaks Legacy Charter School, KIPP Newark, METS Charter School, Newark Educators Community Charter School, North Star Academy Charter School, Peoples Prep Charter School,

Philips Academy Charter School, University Heights Charter School, and Roseville Community Charter School.

Instruction & Program

The Equivalency Application that was developed in 2016 and approved by the State “allowed the effectiveness of the District’s instructional program to be gauged through a variety of student performance measures that were specifically focused on current needs and circumstances.” The Equivalency was approved for three years through 2018-2019. While this Equivalency was in effect, the district, as outlined in the Plan, continued to analyze its annual Instruction and Program data, calculated its own scores and forwarded the data, analysis, and self-scoring to the State for review and confirmation in the spring of 2017, and in June of 2018 and 2019.

As required in the Plan, the District was required to inform the State Department of Education of its intent to apply for the Equivalency, moving forward, when it was due for QSAC monitoring again in the 2019-2020 school year.

The District’s activities in the areas below were addressed with the hiring of an Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning, who with the direction and support of the Deputy Superintendent and Superintendent ensured that:

- Curriculum: The District had a process in place for ongoing review of district curricula based on student performance data and quality of teacher implementation in all grade levels. Curriculum was clearly specified the content to be mastered and was aligned with New Jersey Learning Standards. The District had in place interim assessments in all tested subjects that were appropriate for students with special needs and English Language Learners. All curriculum documents were updated this school year to include the NJQSAC specified fields:
 - Curriculum designed and implemented to meet grade or grade level expectations and graduation requirements;
 - Integrated accommodations and modifications for special education students, English language learners, students at risk of school failure, gifted and talented students and students with 504 plans;
 - Assessments, including formative, summative, benchmark and alternative assessments;
 - List of core instructional and supplemental materials, including various levels of texts at each grade level;
 - Pacing guide;
 - Interdisciplinary connections;
 - Integration of technology skills through NJSLS;
 - Integration of 21st century skills through NJSLS; and
 - Career education.
- Implementation of the Curriculum: The District supported schools with planning resources that complement the curriculum and make it clear what students should learn and when.

Supervisory practices are in place to ensure that instruction in every classroom is reflective of the quality needed to prepare students to meet demands of the curriculum. Professional development is established to address the specific needs of each staff member.

- **Data Informed Decisions:** The Successor Superintendent spent quality time with his Senior Staff, Leadership Teams, and middle managers reviewing available data, targeting certain areas, and discussing strategies for SY 19-20 and 20-21. Actions clearly communicate how data would be used to inform decisions. The Superintendent reported participation and performance results of the annual statewide assessments to the district Board of Education in August 2018 and 2019 at board meetings and retreats and to school administration during Administrators' Orientation in August and throughout the year. Assistant Superintendents had the charge to monitor instruction, along with their principals, and address academic concerns. The reports that were shared included aggregated and disaggregated subgroup data, as well as trend and comparative analyses and appropriate intervention strategies as required by N.J.A.C. 6A:8-4.3.

As the District transitioned from the mandates of the Transition Plan to become compliant with the mandates of QSAC, it completed a self-evaluation (District Performance Review [DPR]) in the Instruction and Program areas. The Essex County Office of the Department of Education, led by Executive County Superintendent, Dr. Joseph Zarra, conducted an on-site QSAC verification process and evaluated the District. The County Office was presented with the physical curriculum binders that had been submitted digitally, prior to the review and any other documentation requested. The score from this review will lend itself to the overall QSAC score for Instruction and Program.

Fiscal Management

Budget Preparation – Much planning went into the District's preparation for balanced annual budgets. Initially there was a working group that performed analysis, discussions with various department heads on needs and cost increases and/or decreases in budgets. The working group was comprised of highly skilled individuals who were knowledgeable in their areas of expertise. After planned meetings for several weeks, the budgets were rolled out to the departments and school administrators with an orientation on how funds were allocated and training on how to use the District's *My Budget File*. The HSP participated in the working group meetings and attended the training sessions for the District administrators. Sessions were well planned and directions were quite clear to attendees.

The District also met with the Budget Committee of the Board on a bi-monthly schedule to discuss all elements of the budget planning and development process. The Board has established a practice of converting the Finance Committee into the Budget Committee. During budget season, beginning in early September, meetings are held to inform and educate the committee on various topics including:

- Sources of Funds
- Spending Analysis and Budget Allocations for both Central Offices and Schools
- Overview of Weighted Student Funding Formula

The Public Budget Hearings were held on time during each of the two years of transition.

Budget best practices were:

- Weighted Student Formula for equitable allocation of funds
- Use of a consistent Budget Development Tool (District-wide My Budget File)
- Training of Users
- Assignment of individualized customer supports (assignment by location)
- Consistent use of Fund Accounting (GAAP)
- Grant Monitoring
- Reporting and Analysis of Financial Activities (monthly, quarterly Projected Budgets or LTF [Latest thinking forecast])
- Ensuring that Financial Staff are professionally certified and attend regular Professional Development in their areas
- Timely monthly reporting of district financial statements as required by the State of NJ

Receipt of Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO) Meritorious Budget Award for 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 for excellence in budget presentation reflects the district's commitment to sound fiscal management and budgetary practices.

The District also received the International ASBO's Certificate of Financial Excellence in June 2017 as recognition for Comprehensive Annual Financial Reporting.

Facilities Management and Operations

The Newark Public Schools received a score of high performing for the area of operations during the NJQSAC review in 2007. In 2008, the NJDOE restored local control to the District for the area. During the transition to local control, the District has continued to make significant improvements in all areas of its operations. There has been a distinct focus on assessing, streamlining and automating several key functions within the operational units.

Facilities Management

In Facilities and Maintenance, the District implemented a database work order system, School Dude, that is used to schedule all work (i.e. Capital, repair, and maintenance projects). This system will cost out the service while tracking material, supplies, and staff time. Additionally, it provides the quantity of materials needed for work orders/jobs.

An Energy Savings Improvement Program (ESIP) has been implemented in 6 district schools, which includes replacement of roofs, improved lighting and boilers. The program is funded from savings realized as a result of more efficient equipment and operations, and has been a successful in reducing stress on the District's budget. Additionally, the District has entered into a Solar Power Purchase Agreement (Solar PPA) with the expectation to further reduce energy consumption with the installation of solar panels.

The District is participating in an extended long-term financing program, Equipment Lease Finance (ELF) agreement. This agreement has provided an opportunity to purchase much needed facilities equipment (boilers, HVAC equipment, unit ventilators). The District's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) two certified buildings has received national recognition for school design and facility management. LEED is the most widely used green building rating system in the world which provides a framework of healthy, highly efficient and cost-saving green buildings.

In an effort to remain in compliance with the NJ Department of Education facilities requirements, the District is currently working with a demographer and an external architectural firm to update its Long Range Facilities Plan (LRFP). With all the new housing that is being constructed throughout the City of Newark, the update to the LRFP will inform the District where new school facilities should be constructed.

As a requirement for NJQSAC, the District completed the health and safety reviews utilizing the Evaluation of School Buildings Checklist Report. An onsite review was conducted, starting in March 2020, by the County Superintendent's office.

A new online facility request and rental system designed to provide a positive user experience for internal and external customers has been introduced. With the new system, reservation requests for facilities use can be submitted online and handled more efficiently. Interested parties who wish to use the District's buildings, athletic facilities, etc. are able to access photos and descriptions, see real-time availability, receive estimated quotes, and pay online. In partnering with the vendor, Facilitron, the Newark Public Schools was able to launch custom facility use sites for the district and each school, allowing facility use requests to be submitted at any time from any location, as long as the requester had access to the internet. The process has assisted with the development of consistent pricing and improved collections of charges for use of the facilities.

In 2016, during the lead in water emergency, the District worked extensively to develop protocols and practices for the identification, remediation and maintenance of a safe water supply for its students and staff. Recently, the District has gone beyond the State requirement in testing water in the schools. The current protocol allows for monthly testing at designated schools on a rotating basis. This testing protocol is continuing and has had positive effects. Results are posted on the district's website upon receipt.

Food & Nutrition

The food services department has expanded its service to include a highly successful "Breakfast in the Classroom" program which has been nationally recognized and ranks in the top five urban districts serving breakfast. Results indicate that Newark is leading the way in serving disadvantaged students. The district also implemented a policy of feeding all students both breakfast and lunch meals at no cost to the student.

Office of Safety

The District hired a former law enforcement officer in the Office of Safety and Security. The department has developed a rigorous program to install metal detectors, hand wands, cameras and video recording devices across all schools using a combination of grants, equipment lease finance (ELF) funds and district funds. With the use of ELF funds, the district has been able to install a comprehensive visitor management and front office automation system. LobbyGuard software and products are designed to increase building security and reduce workload on front desk personnel. Visitors can be checked and tracked through this system.

Motor Transportation

Management of the District's motor transportation services is receiving an overhaul that includes replacement of outdated vehicles. The vehicle replacement program will allow the district to turnover older, obsolete vehicles with newer vehicles to ensure District personnel safety. These leased vehicles will have maintenance packages included with each vehicle to ensure the vehicles are properly maintained and eliminate the overload of work on motor transportation staff. The lease and maintenance programs will reduce the need for stocking vehicle fluids and parts, thereby also reducing the negative impact on operating budget constraints. The fuel dispensing system will be an upgraded computerized system that assigns a unique identification code to each vehicle, ensuring proper monitoring of miles driven per vehicle for maintenance purposes. This process will also address driver accountability. Lastly, each of the vehicles will contain GPS monitoring devices to ensure vehicles are not being improperly used, while also tracking maintenance and system compliance.

Pupil Transportation

Pupil Transportation has assumed responsibility for the Home to School transportation services for special education students and currently operates over 600 individual routes, servicing over 3000 students daily. The departments has also supplemented contractor provided field trips using district owned vehicles and reducing costs to schools. To ensure full driver compliance while operating school buses, district owned school buses will be equipped with a GPS monitoring system and cameras. District buses will continue to fuel up at the Motor Transportation department and will use the newly designed fuel dispensing system.

Personnel

As was previously reported, the Transition Plan does not address specific terms and conditions for the return of this QSAC domain but does reference that there is a separate Personnel Transition Plan which was approved on August 21, 2017 and had to be implemented by the District. The implementation of this plan began in 2017 and continues to date. The Executive Director of Human Resource Services assigned designated staff persons to be responsible for the various requirements. The teams directly responsible are Staffing and Recruitment, Labor Relations, Educator Effectiveness and Employee Services.

The Scorecard in the Transition Plan refers to Achieve NJ and its implementation. The Executive Director of Educator Effectiveness submits regular reports to the Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent,

Assistant Superintendents, Executive Directors, principals and the HSP. The reports ensure that all teachers are on track to receive required observations and evaluations. These reports provide total progress toward completion, and identify to schools and district leadership teachers in need of additional observations. Reports are received bi-weekly (weekly at critical times during the year). Strong documentation supporting the sustainability of this process has been provided to the Comprehensive Compliance Officer (CAO) and will be available on the Rutgers website. Listed below are areas that have been clearly documented that support the effectiveness of the work that is ongoing in the district:

- Evaluation Progress Summaries
- New Teacher Center Mentor Development
- New Teacher Induction
- School Based Administrator Training
- School Leadership Team Training
- Year to Year Comparison of Evaluations

Be reminded that the work of Human Resource Services is not just about Educator Effectiveness. For a better look at all the work that transpired, again be directed to the CAO's report and the strong documentation provided by Newark Public Schools Human Resource Services. One will find every area of the Personnel Transition Plan addressed with updates.

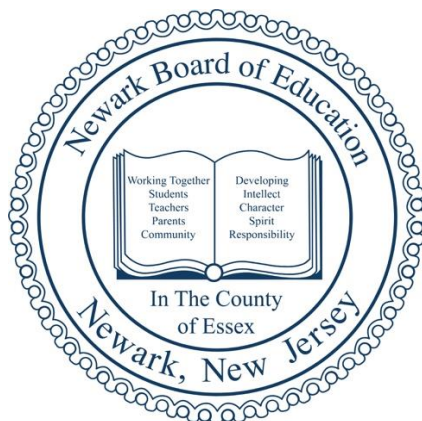
Summary

Having the experience as a prior Deputy Superintendent of the Newark Public Schools allowed for a smooth transition into the District. Upon the arrival of the Successor Superintendent, Roger Leon, his lead to have all levels of staff trained on the various provisions of the Plan, allowed Board Members, Executive Staff, Central Office Staff, and district principals to understand the HSP's role and the process for the transition. The message from the Superintendent set the tone for how each individual would be a part of this transition and was to adhere to requests in a timely manner, adjust practices where necessary, and document all actions. The HSP had total access to meetings, both Board committee meetings and District meetings, trainings, etc. This allowed the HSP to have first-hand knowledge of the work in the District and to be able to offer recommendations and/or document implementation of all areas in the Transition Plan and Accountability Scorecard.

The Newark Public Schools Board of Education, Superintendent and Executive Staff, along with middle management staff, demonstrated their commitment to this process. At no time were road blocks placed to prevent the gathering of documentation, implementation of new practices, or required extensive training. The CAO's interim evaluation supported the progress in the initial report, followed by the first annual report. With the submission of this report and the documentation submitted to the CAO for the second annual report, Newark should be granted full return to local control, having demonstrated that the district has practices in place that allow for continuous sustainability.

Professionally,

Anzella King-Nelms



Roger León, *Superintendent of Newark Public School*

Nicole T. Johnson, *Deputy Superintendent*

Valerie Wilson, *School Business Administrator*

Board Members

Josephine C. Garcia, *President*

Dawn Haynes, *Vice President*

Shayvonne Anderson, *Board Member*

Reginald Bledsoe, *Board Member*

Yambeli Gomez, *Board Member*

Flohisha Hill, *Board Member*

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