

New Jersey Department of Education
Comprehensive Accountability Office for State Supervised School Districts

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

Comprehensive Accountability Office Report—January 2020 Final Report

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Prepared by

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STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



RUTGERS

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SUMMARY

This report of the Comprehensive Accountability Office (CAO) concerns the final phase of the transition of the Newark Public Schools from being a state supervised school district to one with full local control. The report is the 2nd Annual (Final) Report and covers the period of August 1, 2019 through February 1, 2020. It follows the "1st Annual Report that covered February 1, 2018 through January 30, 2019 and the Interim Report that covered February 1, 2019 through July 31, 2019. It continues and finalizes reporting on the district's progress in meeting metrics described in the "Accountability Scorecard that is part of the Transition Plan to local control.

The CAO finds that the NPS has achieved "fully implemented" (4) scores on all the required metrics. This means that the CAO has found that all "elements of the standard are substantially implemented, are sustainable, and have a process for ongoing evaluation."

For a history of the program, the role of the Comprehensive Accountability Office, and explanation of the Scorecard and its Evaluation, readers will find a Background section in the Appendix to this report.

CAO REVIEW AND OBSERVATIONS

The Plan requires the CAO report to "score" the District's efforts toward maintaining "substantial and sustained" progress toward meeting the expectations of the Plan. In its agreement with the Department, the work of the CAO does not include any interpretation or analysis of the data (i.e., could something have been done differently, or evaluating the quality of a presentation). It further reflects that the CAO "must remain neutral and not engage in interpretation, other than its role to ensure, to the extent reasonably possible, the reliability of the data."

While the Plan's expectation of the CAO to not interpret data is conceptually well-intended, in practice, the obligation to evaluate the status of each metric requires limited judgment. Judgment is inherent when it comes to meeting the intent and requirements of the project. The CAO has taken care to remain neutral in making these assessments. Upon review of the online documentation, interested parties may have different interpretations, as reasonable people may view content, data and observations from different perspectives.

In conducting its task, the CAO relied on the appointed *Highly Skilled Professional* (HSP) to gather and provide documentation for evaluation, as well as observations on district activities. Some judgment was exercised to request supplemental data as determined necessary to make observations. All other communications were through telephone or email inquiries and responses. For this report, the CAO's evaluation is based on the CAO's review of NPS documentation provided by the HSP, publicly available data on the district's website, and supplemental information requested by the CAO, all intended to reflect the "Mechanism for Measurement" for each metric.

EVALUATING AND SCORING EACH METRIC

The observations of the CAO are reflected on the tables that follow this section. There is a separate table for each metric. Each metric is shown by category and Plan element, along with the associated Mechanism for Measurement. In some cases, a table combines two related metrics in the same section (but separately scored) as they are closely linked. Documentation supporting the observations are available on the [CAO website](#).¹

This Final Report focuses on the last six months of activity. In addition to evaluating the Metrics, it also includes the scores from the two previous reports to reflect the progress of the District.

Each metric includes an “Evaluation Comment” and “Finding” on the metric; this is the CAO’s observation on the documentation and the conclusion reached. This is reflected in the 1-4 numeric score assigned to the metric. This and the details of the previous evaluation reports are also found at the [CAO website](#).

Several of the plan elements and metrics were actions that were specific to a point in time, and once completed required no additional evaluation. For example, several metrics related to hiring the superintendent. These were fulfilled with the appointment of Superintendent León. The actions were reported in the Interim Report as completed, thus there was no “final evaluation” to complete for the last six months. To reflect consistency, these metrics were granted a “4” to reflect the satisfactory completion.

Similarly, the CAO observes that the processes implementing the ongoing metrics have been integrated into routine operations and thus appear to be sustainable, as long as the Board and Superintendent continue their support. However, the CAO also concludes that the element of “having a process for ongoing evaluation” cannot be fulfilled by predicting what actions the district may or may not take in the future. However, the intent of this requirement will be met the districts ongoing participation in and meeting the requirements of the state’s Quality Single Accountability Continuum (QSAC) program.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The CAO commends and expresses its appreciation and thanks to the Highly Skilled Professional, Ms. Anzella Nelms, for her support, preparation, diligence, and thorough efforts to advise the CAO and provide organized and timely information as requested. It has been her efforts, supported by the Board of Education and Superintendent León and his staff that motivated and encouraged the district to focus and achieve their perfect “4” score.

¹ <http://go.rutgers.edu/NJSDScorecard>

NPS Interim Metric Analysis

Part 1: Fundamental Considerations		Score		
<i>Section 7: Consequences for Not Meeting the Expectations of the Full Transition Plan</i>		Ist Annual	Interim	Final
Metric # 1	The Board does not exhibit a pattern of violations (egregious or otherwise) of the School Ethics Act.	3	4	4
Mechanism for Measurement	Observation by HSP, School Ethics Commission decisions			
Evaluation Comment: The Board's General Counsel advises that during SY 2019-2019 no complaints were filed with the School Ethics Commission against a Board member, no complaints are pending, and no member has been found to violate the law.				
Finding: The district is fully compliant at this time. The district's practices appear to be sustainable.				

Part 1: Fundamental Considerations		Score		
<i>Section 7: Consequences for Not Meeting the Expectations of the Full Transition Plan</i>		Ist Annual	Interim	Final
Metric # 2	The Board adheres to the Conflict of Interest laws and nepotism policy in making personnel decisions and its role in personnel decisions is in line with the division of responsibilities detailed in the plan in Section 7.	4	4	4
Mechanism for Measurement	Observation by HSP, NPS Chief Talent Officer report			
Evaluation Comment: The District's Executive Director of Human Resources advised in July 2019 that the Board has been adhering to Conflict of Interest laws and nepotism policy and that the board's role in personnel policies is consistent with Section 7 of the plan. The CAO is not aware of any matters to the contrary.				
Finding: The district is fully compliant at this time. The district's practices appear to be sustainable.				

Part II: Governance		Score		
<i>Section 2: Ethics Training for BOE and Senior Officials</i>		Ist Annual	Interim	Final
Metric # 3a	All trainings are completed on time by a quorum of the board members.	4	4	4
Metric # 3b	All trainings are completed by each member of the full BOE within 1 month of the deadline.	4	4	4
Mechanism for Measurement	Sign-in sheets, observation by HSP			
Evaluation Comment: a) Board members received specific ethics and other subject matter training on 10/3/19, 1/25/20, and 2/3/20. (b) The HSP advises that at this time board member training is up-to-date and additional training is scheduled consistent with the individual member years on the board the NJSBA schedule.				
Finding: The district is fully compliant at this time. The district's practices appear to be sustainable.				

Part II: Governance	
<i>Section 2: Unmarked Training Plan Element: Governance Best Practices (this element is not listed as a metric but is included in the Transition Training Plan. It is included here for the record.)</i>	
Mechanism for Measurement	Not applicable
<p>Evaluation Comment: State law requires all Board members to take three courses (Governance I, II, and III) provided by the NJ School Boards Association. Board members are required to take at least one of the courses annually over the three years of their first term (there is a fourth course for re-elected members). As of this report, all Board members have taken NJSBA Governance I course that includes Ethics, and those appointed two or three years ago have taken their required courses. It is fully expected that members will take complete their required courses (based on when they joined the Board) in the Fall of 2019 Senior staff members have also taken ethics courses.</p>	
<p>Finding: District is in substantial compliance at this time. Sustainability is expected as the courses are required of board members.</p>	

Part II: Governance		Score		
<i>Section 7: Search for Successor Superintendent</i>		Ist Annual	Interim	Final
Metric # 4	The superintendent search meets all five requirements in conducting the search, as described in the Plan.	4	4	4
Mechanism for Measurement	Observation by HSP, observation and report by state representative on search committee, report by selected search firm			
<p>Evaluation Comment: This Metric was deemed completed in the January 2019 CAO Report. No other reporting is required.</p>				
<p>Finding: The District previously fulfilled the metric.</p>				

Part II: Governance		Score		
<i>Section 7: Search for Successor Superintendent</i>		Ist Annual	Interim	Final
Metric # 5	The Board and search committee substantially meet timelines and deadlines laid out in the Plan.	4	4	4
Mechanism for Measurement	Report by state representative on search committee, report by selected search firm			
<p>Evaluation Comment: This Metric was deemed completed in the January 2019 CAO Report. No other reporting is required.</p>				
<p>Finding: The District previously fulfilled the metric.</p>				

Part II: Governance		Score		
<i>Section 9: Evaluation of the Superintendent</i>		1st Annual	Interim	Final
Metric # 6	The Board adheres to all three requirements of evaluating the successor superintendent, as described in the Plan, upon the conclusion of the successor superintendent's first school year and annually thereafter.	N/A	4	4
Mechanism for Measurement	Observation by HSP, report by successor superintendent			
Evaluation Comment: This Metric was deemed completed in the July 2019 CAO Report. No other reporting is required.				
Finding: The District previously fulfilled the metric.				

Part II: Governance		Score		
<i>Section 13: Expectations Regarding Additional Initiatives</i>		1stA.	Interim	Final
Metric # 7	The Board and District adhere to all requirements and expectations around student enrollment described in the Plan.	4	Pending	4
Mechanism for Measurement	Observation by HSP, review by CAO of publicly available enrollment materials			
Evaluation Comment: The January 2019 report highlighted Newark Enrolls for the FY 2019/20 School year. For SY 2020/2021 the District used the "School Mint" school choice and student enrollment software service. Project management documentation submitted by the Board and the detailed content of the NewarkEnrolls.org website indicate that the plan was met. Because the activities would be completed after the review period ended, the process is not technically complete, but will be later in the spring.				
Finding: The district engaged in activities that will fulfill the metric after the closing period of this report and has established infrastructure to allow for sustainability.				

Part III: Instruction and Program		Score		
<i>Section 2: Student Performance Data</i>		1stA.	Interim	Final
Metric # 8	The District calculates and submits data analysis for the Instruction and Program Equivalency on time (Fall 2018, when PARCC SGP and graduation data become available).	4	4	4
Mechanism for Measurement	Report to State			
Evaluation Comment: Completed: The District's submission in July of 2018 provided compliance for SY 2018/19.				
Finding: The district is fully compliant at this time. The district's practices appear to be sustainable.				

Part III: Instruction and Program		Score		
<i>Section 2: Student Performance Data</i>		Ist Annual	Interim	Final
Metric # 9	The District decides and communicates to the State about whether to apply for an extension of its equivalency or its intention to be evaluated going forward by recently revised QSAC I&P metrics.	N/A	N/A	4
Mechanism for Measurement	Report to State			
Evaluation Comment: The District submitted an Equivalency Application for I&P in January 2020.				
Finding: The district is fully compliant at this time.				

Part III: Instruction and Program		Score		
<i>Section 4: Professional Development for the BOE and Senior Staff regarding Instruction and Program Best Practices</i>		Ist Annual	Interim	Final
Metric # 10a	All trainings are completed on time by a quorum of the board members.	4	4	4
Metric # 10b	All trainings are completed by each member of the full BOE within 1 month of the deadline.	4	4	4
Mechanism for Measurement	Sign-in sheets, Observation and report by HSP			
Evaluation Comment: a) Completed: The district met the plan's deadline of May 2018 as reported in the January 2019 report. In addition, in January of 2020 the Board participated in a retreat addressing Curriculum Development employed by the District. b) Completed: The district met the plan's deadline of May 2018 as reported in the January 2019 report.				
Finding: The district is fully compliant at this time. The district's practices appear to be sustainable.				

Part IV: Fiscal Management		Score		
<i>Section 2: Basic Fiscal Obligations: Budget Requirements and Best Practices</i>		Ist Annual	Interim	Final
Metric # 11a	The District prepares a balanced annual budget based on expense analysis, discussions with individual departments, and incorporation of anticipated new needs and cost increases.	4	4	4
Mechanism for Measurement	Board meeting and Finance Committee minutes, observation and report by HSP, report by Superintendent, report by School Business Administrator and Chief Financial Officer.			
Evaluation Comment: The district's budgeting practices continue from prior evaluations and thus appear well established and integrated into routine activities. While this report does not technically include budget adoption cycle for SY 20/21 (these activities happened after the technical closing date of 1/30/20), documents showing activities are provided here for informational purposes.				
Finding: The district is fully compliant at this time. The district's practices appear to be sustainable.				

Part IV: Fiscal Management		Score		
		Ist Annual	Interim	Final
<i>Section 2: Basic Fiscal Obligations: Budget Requirements and Best Practices</i>				
Metric # 11b	The Board approves a balanced budget on time.	3	4	4
Mechanism for Measurement	Board meeting and Finance Committee minutes, observation and report by HSP, report by Superintendent, report by School Business Administrator and Chief Financial Officer.			
Evaluation Comment: While not technically part of this report, the SY 20/21 budget was scheduled to be adopted on time.				
Finding: The district is fully compliant at this time. The district's practices appear to be sustainable.				

Part IV: Fiscal Management		Score		
		Ist Annual	Interim	Final
<i>Section 2: Basic Fiscal Obligations: Budget Requirements and Best Practices</i>				
Metric # 11c	The Board engages appropriately with the District in the development of the Budget.	3	4	4
Mechanism for Measurement	Board meeting and Finance Committee minutes, observation and report by HSP, report by Superintendent, report by School Business Administrator and Chief Financial Officer.			
Evaluation Comment: The District submitted a comprehensive report on the budget cycle prepared by the HSP that represents the combined input of the Superintendent, School Business Administrator/CFO, and the HSP.				
Finding: The district is fully compliant at this time. The district's practices appear to be sustainable.				

Part IV: Fiscal Management		Score		
		Ist Annual	Interim	Final
<i>Section 2: Basic Fiscal Obligations: Budget Requirements and Best Practices</i>				
Metric # 12	Schools are allocated funding based on school-based budgeting focused on equity and transparency in school allocations.	3	4	4
Mechanism for Measurement	Review of District's budget development files and School Business Administrator's board and public presentations			
Evaluation Comment: The district continued the use of the MyBudgetFile process with its allocation of standard budget elements (floor plan) to teach school, with building principals working with their Assistant Superintendents or senior decision makers as appropriate to resolve any inconsistencies.				
Finding: The district is fully compliant at this time. The district's practices appear to be sustainable.				

Part IV: Fiscal Management		Score		
		Ist Annual	Interim	Final
<i>Section 2: Basic Fiscal Obligations: Budget Requirements and Best Practices</i>				
Metric # 13a	The monthly Board Secretary's report is completed and reconciled without exceptions as described in the Plan.	4	4	4
Mechanism for Measurement	Three times a year the District presents a fiscal forecast for the remainder of the year to the Board, as described in the Plan.			
Evaluation Comment: The District continues its routine practices of providing the monthly Board Secretary's report to the Board. Sample documents of monthly document provided.				
Finding: The district is fully compliant at this time. The district's practices appear to be sustainable.				

Part IV: Fiscal Management		Score		
		Ist Annual	Interim	Final
<i>Section 2: Basic Fiscal Obligations: Budget Requirements and Best Practices</i>				
Metric # 13b	Three times a year the District presents a fiscal forecast for the remainder of the year to the Board, as described in the Plan.	4	4	4
Mechanism for Measurement	Three times a year the District presents a fiscal forecast for the remainder of the year to the Board, as described in the Plan.			
Evaluation Comment: Updates were provided to the Board in October 2020 and February 2021. These reports provided forecasts of year-to-date savings, revenue and expenditure projections through the end of the fiscal year, and comparable amounts for two prior years. A risk assessment of upcoming issues is also provided.				
Finding: The district is fully compliant at this time. The district's practices appear to be sustainable.				

Part IV: Fiscal Management		Score		
		Ist Annual	Interim	Final
<i>Section 2: Basic Fiscal Obligations: Budget Requirements and Best Practices</i>				
Metric # 14	At least monthly, the district prepares and analyzes 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 in a timely manner for the actual amount of incurred expenditures.	4	4	4
Mechanism for Measurement	Observation by HSP, Report by School Business Administrator			
Evaluation Comment: The School Treasurer continues to provide monthly and period reports fulfilling these metrics. Sample documents are provided.				
Finding: The district is fully compliant at this time. The district's practices appear to be sustainable.				

Part IV: Fiscal Management		Score		
		Ist Annual	Interim	Final
<i>Section 2: Basic Fiscal Obligations: Budget Requirements and Best Practices</i>				
Metric # 15	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 (other than permitted under state law and GAAP).	4	Pending	4
Mechanism for Measurement	Year-end CAFR.			
Evaluation Comment: A review of the CAFR, its summary, and a discussion with the district's auditor documented that the district had no deficits or appropriated over-expenditures in any of the funds.				
Finding: The district is fully compliant at this time. The district's practices appear to be sustainable.				

Part IV: Fiscal Management		Score		
		Ist Annual	Interim	Final
Section 3: Professional Development for the BOE and Senior Staff regarding Fiscal Management Best Practices				
Metric # 16a	All trainings are completed on time by a quorum of the board members.	3	4	4
Metric # 16b	All trainings are completed by each member of the full BOE within 1 month of the deadline.	3	4	4
Mechanism for Measurement	Sign-in sheets, Observation by HSP			
Evaluation Comment: The HSP provided a detailed report on the status of the budget and related fiscal activities that are related to NJ QSAC Fiscal Performance Indicators. Training was provided to Board members on these subjects.				
Finding: The district is fully compliant at this time. The district's practices appear to be sustainable.				

Part V: Personnel		Score		
<i>Section 4: Expectations Regarding Additional Personnel Initiatives</i>		1st Annual	Interim	Final
Metric # 17	The District continues to implement AchieveNJ, using both the NPS Framework for Effective Teaching and the NPS Leadership Framework. This includes training school leaders to rigorously and fairly evaluate teachers, supporting teachers based on their evaluations, and exiting low-performing staff when appropriate.	2	4	4
Mechanism for Measurement	Observation by HSP			
<p>Evaluation Comment: The HSP submitted a report reviewing the district’s continuing actions in this area. The report covers training to administrators (who conduct teacher evaluations), targeted support to teachers, new teacher development and tracking, development of a mentorship program, accountability standards, and the results of the project. It also reviews practices and results concerning exit or low performers. The ongoing challenge is to institutionalize this process to ensure it is consistently used in future years.</p>				
<p>Finding: The district is fully compliant at this time. The district’s practices appear to be sustainable.</p>				

ACCOUNTABILITY SCORECARD

RESULTS TO DATE: JANUARY 2019 AND JULY 2019 OBSERVATIONS

The Department of Education anticipated that the NPS was well-positioned to implement the Plan and anticipated successful scores on the metrics. The scores bear out this anticipation.

PLAN SECTION	#	METRIC	STATUS		
			1/19 Annual	7/19 Interim	1/20 Final
Part I: Fundamental Considerations			1/19 Annual	7/19 Interim	1/20 Final
Section 7: Consequences for Not Meeting the Expectations of the Full Transition Plan	1	The Board does not exhibit a pattern of violations (egregious or otherwise) of the School Ethics Act.	3	4	4
	2	The Board adheres to the Conflict of Interest laws and nepotism policy in making personnel decisions and its role in personnel decisions is in line with the division of responsibilities detailed in the plan in Section 7.	4	4	4
Part II: Governance			1/19 Annual	7/19 Interim	1/20 Final
Section 2: Ethics Training for BOE and Senior Officials	3	All trainings are completed on time by a quorum of the board members.	4	4	4
		All trainings are completed by each member of the full BOE within 1 month of the deadline.	3	4	4
Section 7: Search for Successor Superintendent	4	The superintendent search meets all five requirements in conducting the search, as described in the Plan.	4	4	4
	5	The Board and search committee substantially meet timelines and deadlines laid out in the Plan.	4	4	4
Section 9: Evaluation of the Superintendent	6	The Board adheres to all three requirements of evaluating the successor superintendent, as described in the Plan, upon the conclusion of the successor superintendent's first school year and annually thereafter.	N/A	4	4
Section 13: Expectations Regarding Additional Initiatives	7	The Board and District adhere to all requirements and expectations around student enrollment described in the Plan.	4	Pending	4

PLAN SECTION	#	METRIC	STATUS		
			1/19 Annual	7/19 Interim	1/20 Final
Part III: Instruction and Program					
Section 2: Student Performance Data	8	The District calculates and submits data analysis for the Instruction and Program Equivalency on time (Fall 2018, when PARCC SGP and graduation data become available).	N/A	4	4
	9	The District makes a decision and communicates to the State about whether to apply for an extension of its equivalency or its intention to be evaluated going forward by recently revised QSAC I&P metrics.	N/A	N/A	4
Section 4: Professional Development for the BOE and Senior Staff regarding Instruction and Program Best Practices	10	All trainings are completed on time by a quorum of the board members.	4	4	4
		All trainings are completed by each member of the full BOE within 1 month of the deadline.	4	4	4

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PLAN SECTION	#	METRIC	STATUS		
			1/19 Annual	7/19 Interim	1/20 Final
Part IV: Fiscal Management					
Section 2: Basic Fiscal Obligations: Budget Requirements and Best Practices	11	The District prepares a balanced annual budget based on expense analysis, discussions with individual departments, and incorporation of anticipated new needs and cost increases.	4	4	4
		The Board approves a balanced budget on time.	3	4	4
		The Board engages appropriately with the District in the development of the Budget.	3	4	4
	12	Schools are allocated funding based on school-based budgeting focused on equity and transparency in school allocations.	3	4	4
	13	The monthly Board Secretary's report is completed and reconciled without exceptions as described in the Plan.	4	4	4
		Three times a year the District presents a fiscal forecast for the remainder of the year to the Board, as described in the Plan.	4	4	4
	14	At least monthly, the district prepares and analyzes 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 in a timely manner for the actual amount of incurred expenditures.	4	4	4
15	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 (other than permitted under state law and GAAP).	4	Pending	4	
Section 3: Professional Development for the BOE and Senior Staff Regarding Fiscal Management Best Practices	16	All trainings are completed on time by a quorum of the board members.	3	4	4
		All trainings are completed by each member of the full BOE within 1 month of the deadline.	3	4	4

PLAN SECTION	#	METRIC	STATUS		
			1/19 Annual	7/19 Interim	1/20 Final
Part V - Personnel					
Section 4: Expectations Regarding Additional Personnel Initiatives	17	The District continues to implement AchieveNJ, using both the NPS Framework for Effective Teaching and the NPS Leadership Framework. This includes training school leaders to rigorously and fairly evaluate teachers, supporting teachers based on their evaluations, and exiting low-performing staff when appropriate.	2	4	4

NPS Transition Metric Analysis

APPENDIX A

Background of State Supervision of Newark Public Schools

After more than two decades under full supervision by the State Department of Education, Newark Public Schools (NPS) continued its migration to full local control in February of 2018. The return of full local control, however, is predicated upon the district successfully meeting requirements of a Transition Plan (Plan) approved by the State Board of Education. With the issuance of this report, the district is one step closer to full local control.

The Plan documents the process, actions, and commitments required by the District (its Administration and the now elected Board of Education, together) and the New Jersey Department of Education that allowed the State to withdraw from partial intervention in the areas of Governance and Instruction & Program. Successful and sustainable implementation will return authority and oversight over the District in its entirety to the local Board of Education. The State previously withdrew from areas of Operations, Fiscal Management, and Personnel.

The Plan “is predicated on optimism that progress will continue in the future.” However, it also acknowledges that care and attention are required to prevent the District from regressing on efforts to improve and a return to the circumstances that led to State intervention. The Plan, therefore, provides “assistance, transparency, and accountability during the transition period and is designed to support sustainable improvements that will continue to benefit the children of Newark for many years to come.” The plan created an “Accountability Scorecard” to measure the district’s success in implementing these improvements.

The Plan notes that over the last few years the District has seen significant success in achieving its goals and demonstrating that progress is sustainable. As the end of the long process, the Plan requires the Department to continue its monitoring to ensure the plan is successfully implemented and is sustainable. The Plan is scheduled to expire on January 31, 2020, but the State Board of Education must find that NPS has satisfied all components of the Plan before the transition to local control is complete.

To support the transition effort, the state has appointed a “Highly Skilled Professional” (HSP) to assist in the implementation of the plan. In addition, the State has placed Auditors in the district to support budgetary and accounting integrity.

A final element of support is the creation of the “Comprehensive Accountability Office.” Taken together, these elements, working in concert with the District and its combination of newly elected and remaining former advisory members² of the Board of Education and the board-appointed Superintendent are expected to lead the way to continued success for the students of Newark.

² The Board no longer acts as an Advisory Board. As of February 1, 2019, the Board was constituted as a full operating board. The remaining members who were initially appointed as advisory members will be subject to election as their terms expire.

Role of The Comprehensive Accountability Office

The Plan called for the State to partner with “an independent entity to form a Comprehensive Accountability Office (CAO) with the capacity to collect, analyze, and publish data regarding the ongoing operations and performance of school districts and boards recently exited from State intervention and returned to local control.” The NPS is the first district the CAO is tasked to support. The program has since been expanded to include Paterson Public Schools and Jersey City Public Schools.

After a series of meetings with Department staff and consultants (which extended over the change in state administrations from 2017 into 2018), the Commissioner of Education, who oversees the work of the CAO, engaged the Bloustein Local Government Research Center, a unit of the Rutgers University Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy to serve as the CAO under a contract with the Department. Bloustein Local is composed of individuals with deep experience in New Jersey state and local government activities, along with an understanding of public school administration that enables them to perform this task. The Commissioner has expressed full confidence in the capacity of Bloustein Local to fulfill the unique position of the CAO.³

The CAO is charged with gathering and analyzing data from the District and State (supported by the HSP) to monitor progress and compliance with the metrics established in the Plan’s Accountability Scorecard “to determine if the expectations for sustained progress and continual improvement continue to be met.”

Specifically, the CAO is be responsible to:

1. Compile relevant data and information to establish the annual status of the District compared to the Scorecard metrics and providing information necessary to assess annual progress on the Plan.
2. Publish and present the data to the Department and to the public in a credible, digestible, and actionable way, such as through the development of an easy to understand dashboard of District performance as a website.

The CAO is to present observations and findings based on evidence, but not to express value interpretations concerning Scorecard compliance. Under the Plan, the CAO report findings (along with other inputs), if warranted, allows the Department to establish interventions to address concerns or deficiencies.

This report is the second of two required annual reports required under the Plan. The CAO previously released the first annual and semi-annual (Interim) reports. This report contains web links to the evidence relied upon by the CAO for its observations. All the reports and documents are posted on the CAO’s website at <http://go.rutgers.edu/NJSDScorecard>.

The Scorecard and its Evaluation

The Accountability Scorecard is the core of the CAO’s role. This table represents the expectations contained in the Transition Report on which the CAO conducts its efforts. Specifically, it is “to track and measure the District’s progress toward implementing this transition plan, and a timetable for activities relating to and leading to the withdrawal of State intervention, which identifies and sequences the benchmarks laid out throughout this Plan in the appropriate sections.”

³ The biography of the CAO’s Principal Investigator, Marc Pfeiffer is included as an Appendix to the report

The Scorecard tracks the Plan through five sections:

- Part 1 – Fundamental Considerations
- Part 2 – Governance
- Part 3 – Instruction and Program
- Part 4 – Fiscal Management
- Part 5 - Personnel

The Scorecard covers most, but not all the requirements in the Plan. It includes specific metrics and mechanisms for measurement that are aligned with the Plan. The work of the CAO is built on top of it. The Plan requires the CAO to assess compliance with the metrics through its measurement standards. The CAO's assessment is to be accompanied by documentation that supports its observations.

The Plan notes that it is not only the Scorecard, but that the Plan itself should be "seen as a complimentary process to the QSAC⁴." The District is still expected to complete the annual Statement of Assurance required by the QSAC and prepare for QSAC monitoring as required. The District filed for "equivalency" of Instruction and Program Indicators during the 2016-2017 school year and approval was given by the Department for a three-year period. That approval expires in 2020. The District wants the Department to continue the equivalency and has submitted that request to the Department.

The Plan calls for each metric to be evaluated on the following scale:

- 1 - **Not Implemented:** There is no significant evidence that the standard is implemented.
- 2 - **Partially Implemented:** A partially implemented standard is being met in only a limited way.
- 3 - **Substantially Meeting:** Most elements of the metric are being met and are sustainable.
- 4 - **Fully Implemented:** All elements of the standard are substantially implemented, are sustainable, and have a process for ongoing evaluation.

Given the timing of this report and the expected phase-in of various plan elements, the CAO added to the list a *Not Applicable (NA)* category for the first and interim reports, indicating that the metric cannot be measured at those points in time, but were measured in subsequent reports. On several occasions, the rating of *Pending* was given as the activity was in the process of taking place at the time of the evaluation.

The Scorecard showing the evaluation over the entire two-year period is provided as Table 1. During the First Report the CAO observed that the Mechanism for Measurement for Metrics 8 and 9 is "Report **by** State" was inconsistent with the Metric. Compliance with both metrics requires the submission of documents to the Department (State). These metrics do not require a report by the state; they require action by the district. Upon consultation with the Department and the district, it was concluded the only valid meaning of the measurement is the filing of documents with the Department. Based on the foregoing, the CAO's observations are based on this adjustment and the report reflects the change from *by* to *to* for Metrics 8 and 9.

⁴ QSAC, the "Quality Single Accountability Continuum" is the N.J. Department of Education's monitoring and district self-evaluation system for public school districts. www.state.nj.us/education/genfo/qsac/

A similar implementation matter with the original Plan that warranted a mid-course adjustment was found with the “4-Fully Implemented” evaluation standard. This requires that three elements be met:

1. All elements of the standard are substantially implemented,
2. are sustainable, and
3. have a process for ongoing evaluation.

While the first and second elements are documentable, the third presents a greater challenge. It suggests that a process exists past the evaluation period, as it represents a decision to establish a long-term activity. Its nature warrants that it takes into account matters such as annual operations, changes in public policy, process maturity followed by evolution, periodic re-evaluation, and the impact of unanticipated circumstances (e.g., impact of health pandemics).

However, the QSAC self-evaluation program, which includes review by the County Executive Superintendent of Schools, provides the resolution to this issue. As the metrics are effectively included in the relevant sections of the QSAC, the district’s tri-annual review will serve the purposes of this requirement.

NPS Transition Metric Analysis

APPENDIX B

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Research Interests

Municipal Governments

Finance and Property Taxation

Public Contracting

Shared Government Services

Technology

Energy management

Marc H. Pfeiffer retired in 2012 from a 37-year career in New Jersey local government administration, having served as a municipal administrator in several municipalities, and 26 years of service in the State's local government oversight agency, the Division of Local Government Services. At DLGS he served as Deputy Director for 14 years, and periodically as Acting Director. He is now in this third public service career at the Bloustein School where he continues to assist state and local government officials and the public on a range of public policy and administrative matters.

Marc has broad experience in many areas of local government policy and administration, including specific expertise in areas such as finance and property taxation, public procurement, shared services and consolidation, technology, energy, labor relations, and general local and state government administration. He also has deep experience in the legislative process and as a regulatory officer.

In addition to supporting Bloustein Local, Marc makes his extensive government experience available as a guest lecturer, conference presenter, and other collaborative efforts. He is also assisting the Rutgers School of Public Affairs and Administration with the State's Certified Public Manager Program in curriculum development and instruction.

He also serves as the Principal Investigator for Bloustein Local in its capacity as the N.J. Department of Education's Chief Accountability Office for state supervised school districts in the process of exiting state supervision. He is also the Principal Investigator of a joint research project of Bloustein Local and the Center for Building Knowledge at the New Jersey Institute of Technology. The project, a grant from the US Department of Energy through the NJ Board of Public Utilities is studying the procurement, financing, and policy issues surrounding Town Center Advanced Microgrids.

The Bloustein Local Government Research Center

New Jersey is served by more than 1,500 distinct local government agencies: municipalities, school districts, utilities, counties, and more. Yet, even with this wealth of opportunity, precious little substantive research has been done within the local government environment to inform some of our state's most pressing policy issues.

The **Bloustein Local Government Research Center**, or **Bloustein Local** <http://blousteinlocal.rutgers.edu/> serves as a focal point and engages in a range of services, including:

- Encouraging and conducting applied and academic research on local government fiscal and administrative issues, emphasizing application and support to New Jersey local government.
- Developing resources that can assist others in conducting research and analysis.
- Organizing and hosting conferences and symposia on New Jersey local government fiscal and administrative issues.
- Supporting New Jersey local government fiscal and administrative policy development, implementation, and analysis through contract research and on-call advice for organizations and institutions that engage in local government policy setting and policymaking.
- Promoting and increasing public understanding of local government issues by partnering with and supporting civic and media organizations that inform and educate the public on local government matters.

A list of the Center's current projects may be found online at <http://blousteinlocal.rutgers.edu/projects/>.

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