

August 29, 2014

To: John King, Commissioner

From: Judy Elliott, Distinguished Educator 

Re: 2014 Third Quarterly Action Plan Update - Buffalo City School District (BCSD)

Attached please find the third and final quarterly Action Plan Status Update for the time period of SY2012-2014. Specifically, this update reflects the period of April – July 2014. Supporting documents/appendices are referenced in this update, but are not included. However, they remain available for your review upon request.

Each action step has been highlighted in green, yellow, or red. Green representing accomplished, yellow in progress, and red not yet progressing. Staff provided information in the column entitled 'Status Update as of July 18, 2014.' This update was a considerable challenge due to the magnitude of the impact of transition taking place in BCSD in early spring until now.

There are several areas that remain red. Most of these areas have shown neither intentional movement toward improvement, nor action on the part of the District to address them (e.g., Students with Disabilities, English learners, Criterion Schools, Promotion/Retention, Student Placement). While there have been many discussions, meetings, and focus groups to specifically address these areas, little systemic change has occurred. In some cases plans have been developed but never implemented.

The District had begun to make progress across several areas, however it was abruptly halted when personnel changes occurred mid-year. Since that time, the District has been unable to gain a foothold that would allow it to continue progress in areas of the Action Plan.

The new organizational structure yielded little additional support to Priority Schools for SY 13-14. Coordination, alignment, and communication across offices continue to be a challenge at central office.

As noted in all earlier Action Plan updates, data must be submitted as evidence of the work reported. The absence of such data precluded some action steps from moving from yellow to green and in some cases returning to red.

While the District has taken a positive step toward creating more data dialogue, the critical infrastructure to coordinate and makes accurate data readily accessible has yet to be honed. The absence of these systems precludes leadership, at all levels, to make informed systemic decisions, monitor progress, and evaluate return on investment.

In summary, the Action Plan was originally designed as a collaborative process, with former Superintendent Pamela Brown, to produce a blueprint to guide the Buffalo City School District actions to improve systems, structures, accountability and support for all schools, and specifically the 28 Priority Schools.

At the end of a two-year period of time - Priority schools are that in name only. A critical need continues to exist to implement the Action Plan to differentiate service support, communication, and accountability for these schools. Priority schools, while they have significant challenges at the site level, have not received the level, types and prioritized supports by the central office necessary to increase the capacity of these schools to implement transformative practices. Until and unless these Priority schools are a priority in terms of time, leadership, resources and shared responsibility of the central office, significant, positive change is unlikely.

Should you have any questions or additional requests regarding this update, please contact me at your convenience.

Cc: Board of Education
Don Ogilvie, Interim Superintendent