



THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

Interim Commissioner of Education
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November 14, 2019

Mr. Van Henri White, President
Board of Education
Rochester City School District
131 West Broad Street
Rochester, NY 14614

RE: Response to Distinguished Educator's Action Plan Revisions

Dear Mr. White:

In August 2018, in accordance with Education Law §§211-b and 211-c and Commissioner's Regulations §§100.16 and 100.17, Dr. Jaime Aquino was appointed as Distinguished Educator (DE) of the Rochester City School District (RCSD or "the District") to provide additional support to improve the District's systems, structures, and operations, as well as address significant gaps in student services and academic performance.

In November 2018, Dr. Aquino submitted to the New York State Education Department (NYSED or "the Department") his Distinguished Educator's report with recommendations to which you were asked to provide a District response. The District's initial action plan was submitted in February 2019. Based on feedback from the Department, RCSD made revisions to that plan and subsequently submitted its revised action plan in June 2019. The Department provided additional feedback on the version submitted in June, and RCSD submitted a revised action plan on August 30, 2019.

Department staff reviewed the revised action plan and determined that the recent version addresses most areas of the previous feedback provided by the Department. As a result, RCSD should proceed with implementing the final version of its approved action plan.

While the Department recognizes the efforts RCSD has made to address its feedback, there are specific items within the Finances section and the Parent Engagement section of the action plan that would benefit from additional modifications.

Given the recent news concerning the District's fiscal situation, the Department has provided additional feedback for each of the DE's recommendations in the Finances section through the accompanying Financial Addendum and established a Fiscal Corrective Action Plan for the District. A majority of the Financial Addendum feedback pertains to concerns with the decentralized approach to budget and finance employed by the District. On the fiscal side, the District is to adhere to the dates and expectations outlined in the Fiscal Corrective Action Plan. The Department will also expect to see that RCSD has addressed all of the feedback that has been provided as well as the findings from the audit of the 2018-19 overspending, in future months.

In addition, there are sections of the Parent Engagement plan in which the feedback was not fully addressed, and the revisions do not fully embrace the guidance provided. The Department expected to see defined, quantifiable goals that apply to all Parent Liaisons and Home-School

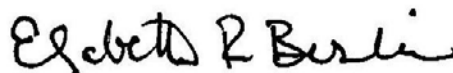
Assistants and are connected to proactively engaging parents. Additionally, the Department expected to see more emphasis on the parent survey tool as a means of identifying parent perceptions and determining where improvement is needed. When Department staff visit the District in the months ahead, we will follow up with regard to measures of progress toward identified success metrics.

The Department will monitor the progress of the District's implementation of its action plan in the following ways:

- RCSD shall submit Quarterly Reports to the Department for the purpose of providing a summary of the District's actions toward each of the sections of the action plan. These Quarterly Reports will be posted publicly and shall be in the same format as Dr. Aquino's Quarterly Reports. The first of these reports is due on November 30, 2019.
- Department program staff from the Office of Special Education, Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages, and Office of Accountability will visit the district monthly to monitor the progress of the District's action plan. The first three meetings will occur on the following dates:
 - November 15, 2019 (via video)
 - December 19, 2019
 - January 23, 2020
- During these visits and other interactions between the Department and RCSD, Department staff will look to confirm that activities identified in action plan prior to the meeting have occurred as described in the District's plan.
- Department program staff will continue to expect timely completion of RCSD required submissions and required actions pertaining to Special Education, English Language Learners, schools in the New York State Receivership program, and schools identified as either Comprehensive Support and Improvement or Targeted Support and Improvement.
- In addition, RCSD will now be expected to submit specific items related to the district's fiscal health. These items are outlined in the attached Financial Addendum and accompanying Fiscal Corrective Action Plan. Items required under this plan shall be submitted to the following email address for review: CAPFISCAL@nysed.gov.

We appreciate RCSD's efforts to fully address the Department's previous feedback in developing a cohesive plan to support the students of Rochester. We look forward to a continued partnership with the District in the upcoming school year and to supporting the District's efforts to implement the action plan and ultimately improve educational outcomes for students in the Rochester City School District.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth R. Berlin
Interim Commissioner

Enclosure

c: Terry Dade
Kimberly Young Wilkins