

## **NJDOE News**

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### **Commissioner Hespe Names Transition Team in Jersey City**

Commissioner of Education David Hespe today announced his appointment of a 15-member team that will recommend the elements of a transition plan to return the Jersey City Public Schools to local control. The team will explore issues that should be addressed before the state-operated district can be administered exclusively by its own local school board and central office. It will advise the Commissioner in the form of a report to be issued by November 1, 2000.

"Last week, the State Board of Education approved my proposal to assemble a team of school and community representatives - including parents and students - to recommend the strategies and activities that should take place before we fully return the district to local control," Commissioner Hespe said.

"In the nearly 12 years since Jersey City became the first state-operated school district in the nation, school officials, parents and students have worked very hard to overcome a decades-long cycle of failure," the Commissioner continued. "As a result of the district's impressive rate of improvement, now is the appropriate time to plan for a smooth and effective shift in leadership from the state to the local level.

"Although the district is not yet eligible under the law to be fully certified by the state, it has taken giant steps back from the brink of failure. I look forward to the transition team's report so that we can plan the next phase of the district's full recovery," Hespe said.

Chairing the transition team is Gregg Butterfield, immediate past president of the Jersey City Board of Education. A construction company executive, Butterfield is a long-time city resident with children in the school system.

The entire transition team consists of 15 voting members and four ex-officio members for a total of nineteen. Team members include seven women and nine members of ethnic minorities (five African-Americans and four Hispanics). Twelve members live in Jersey City - with half having children in the public schools -- and the rest either have a long history of working in the city or are state government officials. Two are currently elected members of the city's school board, and one is a former member and chair.

In addition to Butterfield as Chairman, the other 14 voting members of the board are:

- William Carroll, a math teacher in the city, recipient of the Merrill Lynch Teacher-of-the-Year award for P.S. #23, and representative of the Jersey City Education Association.
- Thomas De Gise, president of the Jersey City Municipal Council and a teacher in the city.
- Dr. Abigail Douglas-Johnson, vice president for Academic Affairs and Dean, Hudson County Community College.
- Willie Flood, current member of the Jersey City Board of Education; former teacher and assistant principal in the city; former elected member of the Jersey City Council.
- Thomas Gallagher, chief of staff for Mayor Bret Schundler.
- Suzanne Mack, current president of the Jersey City Board of Education; a long-time resident with children in the public schools.
- Gerald McKeon, an assistant school principal and representative of the New Jersey Principals & Supervisors Association.
- Rev. Dr. George Maize, pastor of the Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church of Jersey City.
- Luz Mayi, active in parents' activities and the Hispanic community in Jersey City for many years.
- Peter Murphy, president of the Hudson County Chamber of Commerce.
- Kevin O'Reilly, leader of Local 2262, for the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME).
- Robert Perry, an administrator and professor at St. Peter's College, a city resident with children in the district.
- Lourdes Santiago, an attorney and an alumna of the Jersey City Public Schools.
- Diane Vasquez, a business executive and parent activist in Jersey City.

The four non-voting members of the transition team are:

- Maryz Maggie Habib, a senior at Dickinson High School and a student representative. (Alternate student representative is Angela Morris, a senior at McNair Academic High School).
- Robert Osak, Hudson County Superintendent of Schools
- Ben Rarick, director, Office of State-Operated School Districts
- Dr. Richard A. DiPatri, Jersey City State District Superintendent of Schools.

In addition, Commissioner Hesse announced the selection of Dr. Carlos Hernández, president of New Jersey City University, as the Higher Education Resource Person to the Jersey City Board of Education. Dr. Hernández, a long-time university professor, is also a former member of the State Board of Education.

At a later date, Commissioner Hesse will be announcing the selection of his Personal Liaison to work closely with the Jersey City Board during the transition process.

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