

NJDOE News

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DOE Releases QSAC Reviews for Seven State-Operated/Level II Districts

After a department examination of the NJ QSAC (Quality Single Accountability Continuum) monitoring reports of the state-operated and Level II districts, Education Commissioner Lucille E. Davy has recommended that the governance and financial functions of the Jersey City school district and the operations management function of the Newark school district be returned to local control.

DOE released the completed QSAC reports for Asbury Park, Camden, Irvington, Jersey City, Newark, Trenton and Salem City today. The reports for Paterson and Atlantic City were deemed incomplete and had been returned to the reviewing team for revisions. The department expects to release those within the next week.

In Jersey City, the Commissioner will recommend to the State Board of Education that the process for initiating transition to local control begin in the governance and financial functions of the school system. In each of those areas, the district met more than 80 percent of the performance indicators, demonstrating a high level of success.

Next year, the Jersey City Board of Education must request a special election to determine whether the locally-controlled new Board will be elected or appointed by the mayor.

Newark met 86 percent of the performance indicators in the operations management function, which includes areas such as facilities management, student conduct, safety and health and school security. As a result of this successful score, the Commissioner will recommend that the district regain authority over operations management.

"One of the main purposes in the development of QSAC was to provide a long-needed 'exit strategy' for the state-operated districts which did not exist in the old state takeover law," Commissioner Davy said. "The new system gives us a mechanism to return various district functions to local control while maintaining state intervention in areas that remain problematic."

"DOE does not want to run school districts, but we have a responsibility to make sure they are well-run," the Commissioner said. "QSAC was built on the principles of uniform monitoring standards, efficiency, prevention, early identification of significant problems and DOE involvement only for the time necessary and only in areas of need."

The district performance reviews used in the QSAC process focus on five key components of school district operations that research has identified as key factors in effective school districts: Instruction and Program; Personnel; Fiscal Management; Operations Management; and Governance.

Each district's level of compliance with performance standards established by the department is determined either through a self-evaluation verified by the County Superintendent or an external review (the state-operated and Level II districts were evaluated under a contract with the Montclair State University School of Education.)

If a district meets more than 80 percent of the indicators in a given component, the district is deemed to be "high performing" in that area. Achievement of between 50 percent and 80 percent will require that the district file a corrective action plan in that area.

If a district meets less than 50 percent of the indicators in a given area, DOE will work with the district to identify problems and provide needed assistance. In addition, the Commissioner can recommend state intervention in those areas. Those determinations will be made as this process moves forward.

Asbury Park, Camden, Irvington, Salem City and Trenton are not state-operated districts and maintain local control of all of their operations. However, in several of the district reports released today, serious areas of concern were identified. Discussions will soon begin to establish a structured system of improvement and intervention activities in each district:

- Asbury Park met 15 percent of the performance indicators in Instruction and Program, 28 percent in Personnel, 72 percent in Operations Management, 11 percent in Governance and 36 percent in Fiscal Management.
- Camden met six percent of the performance indicators in Instruction and Program, five percent in Personnel, 39 percent in

Operations Management, 11 percent in Governance and 31 percent in Fiscal Management.

- Irvington met 30 percent of the performance indicators in Instruction and Program, 45 percent in Personnel, 55 percent in Operations Management, 44 percent in Governance and 42 percent in Fiscal Management.
- Salem City met 69 percent of the performance indicators in Instruction and Program, 78 percent in Personnel, 87 percent in Operations Management, 56 percent in Governance and 85 percent in Fiscal Management.
- Trenton met 11 percent of the performance indicators in Instruction and Program, 22 percent in Personnel, 67 percent in Operations Management, 22 percent in Governance and 60 percent in Fiscal Management.
- Jersey City met 57 percent of the indicators in Instruction and Program, 58 percent of the indicators in Personnel, 74 percent in Operations Management, 89 percent in Governance and 92 percent in Fiscal Management.
- Newark met 39 percent of the indicators in Instruction and Program, 32 percent of the indicators in Personnel, 86 percent of the indicators in Operations Management, 45 percent in Governance and 66 percent in Fiscal Management.

Along with the QSAC reports, the department also released the seven districts' Curriculum Audits and Professional Development Reviews required last year by the New Jersey Supreme Court. The reports were designed to determine:

- Whether the district has a local Board-approved curriculum aligned to NJQSAC elements for all subject content areas.
- Whether the district's curriculum is being implemented in the classrooms.
- Whether the academic program is supported by staff development.
- What staff development has taken place in the district since September, 2005, and what it has cost.

All the reports referenced in this news release are available at <http://www.state.nj.us/education/genfo/qsac/etr/>. Included for each district are the Evaluation Team Review, the Commissioner's Report and the Curriculum Report.