

Governor Phil Murphy

Murphy Administration Announces the Return of Full Local Control to Paterson Public Schools

01/6/2021

TRENTON, NJ – Today, the New Jersey State Board of Education voted to return full local control to the Paterson Public Schools Board of Education after nearly 30 years of state control of district operations. This is the second school district to be withdrawn from state control under the Murphy Administration. The State Board of Education returned full local control to Newark Public Schools in July 2020.

"The resolution adopted today marks a momentous day for Paterson Public Schools," **said Governor Phil Murphy**. "This milestone is made possible due to the dedication of the district's school board, administrators, educators, and students who have conquered the challenges they faced. I am confident that Paterson Public Schools will continue to provide our students with the high-quality education that they deserve."

"Today's resolution returning local control to Paterson School District is a testament to the hard work and dedication of Paterson's administration, teachers, staff and, most importantly, its students," **said Acting Education Commissioner Angelica Allen-McMillan**. "I commend Superintendent Eileen Shafer and the Paterson Board of Education for their leadership and our Highly Skilled Professionals for their assistance leading up to this monumental day."

On August 7, 1991, the State Board of Education suspended the authority to the Paterson Public Schools Board of Education and took control of the school district, which had struggled for years with academic and management issues.

In 2018, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) determined that the Paterson Public Schools Board of Education met the qualifications necessary for the return to local control and established a two-year transition plan. The NJDOE called upon an independent entity, the Bloustein Local Government Research Center at Rutgers University, to create a Comprehensive Accountability Office (CAO) to assess the school district's progress toward meeting benchmarks in the transition plan. The CAO measured the school district's quantitative progress in meeting metrics in fundamental considerations, governance, instruction and programming, fiscal management, and personnel. The NJDOE hired three Highly Skilled Professionals (Mr. Theodore Best, Jr., Dr. Stephen Cowan, and Dr. Alexis Colander) to assist the district in implementing the transition plan and to provide qualitative observations regarding the district's progress.

On Wednesday, the State Board of Education received the final reports from the CAO and the Highly Skilled Professionals, which confirmed that the district successfully fulfilled the requirements of the transition plan. Upon receiving Acting Commissioner Allen-McMillan's recommendation to return full local control to the district, the State Board of Education adopted a resolution that withdraws the district from state intervention.

"As a former educator, I know well that our education system is the cornerstone of society. Wherever we go as a community, as a state, as a country, and as a civilization depends first on our commitment to education," **said U.S. Rep. Bill Pascrell, Jr.** "Amid a pandemic and against long odds, the Silk City has proven itself once again to be the city that never quits. I extend my sincerest gratitude to Mayor Sayegh, Superintendent Shafer, School Board President Simmons, Acting Commissioner Allen-McMillan, and our brilliant school principals whose leadership has brought us to this moment. Thanks to the tireless efforts of school administrators, public servants, and community leaders, our school system will soon return to local control. I could not be prouder of our city."

"As one who has worked hand in hand with stakeholders, and who has also listened to countless constituent parents who have pleaded for decades for the city to take back local control, I am proud to say that the time is now," **said Senator Nellie Pou**. "Thirty years is a long time, and for Paterson schools, it is long enough. I see today as an exciting day, a day of hope, a day of a well-earned independence, a day of relief – for not only those of us that have tirelessly advocated for this – but for our educators, our families, our children, and the community at-large."

"This final step of restoring full local control of the Paterson Public School District has been long overdue," **said Assemblywoman Shavonda Sumter**. "This step marks a new beginning of hope, confidence and restoration which allows power to rest in the hands of families and educators. The continued support from the Department of Education, the Executive Administration, Federal Government, and my teammates in the Legislature will be necessary for continued success along this journey."

"Today marks a new and exciting chapter for Paterson Public Schools," **said Assemblyman Benji Wimerly**. "This resolution will allow the district to make critical education decisions tailored to our students' needs. I applaud Paterson's administrators and educators for their unwavering commitment to our students and our schools."

"Today is truly a historic day in the City of Paterson," **said Mayor Andre Sayegh**. "Regaining full local control has been a top priority and this restoration will finally allow Patersonians to have a seat at the table to make decisions toward our children's future. From the administrators to the educators, I can't thank you enough for your steadfast commitment to lead us toward this milestone."

"Today, the voices of the people of Paterson have been restored to their full strength in the decisions about how the city's children will be educated," **said Eileen F. Shafer, Paterson Superintendent of Schools**. "We eagerly take on the full responsibility of shaping Paterson's future, and we know that how well this school district succeeds is entirely up to us. We will need everybody – especially educators, board members, administrators, students and parents – to work together. This is an achievement that was earned through a tremendous amount of work over a long period of time by a great number of people. I am tremendously grateful for the hard work of the Paterson Board of Education Commissioners who have taken their role very seriously to achieve local control, as well as the district's parents, the teachers, principals, vice-principals, supervisors, administrators, counselors, nurses, secretaries, paraprofessionals, food service professionals, facilities staff, custodians, child study teams members, and all school and district employees. I want to thank Governor Murphy, Acting Education Commissioner Dr. Angelica Allen-McMillan, former Education Commissioner Dr. Lamont Repollet, Board of Education President Kathy Goldenberg, and the state's Highly Skilled Professionals Theodore Best, Dr. Stephen Cowan, and Dr. Alexis Colander. All of Paterson Public Schools students, families, and professionals greatly appreciate the leadership and

assistance all of you have provided.”

“This is a great day for Paterson Public Schools,” **said Kenneth L. Simmons, President of the Paterson Board of Education.** “Let it be a starting point for the great achievements of our students and our schools that will be made in this new era of Paterson Public Schools that is ultimately governed by the people of Paterson. There will be important decisions to be about the future of our children. But those decisions will be made by the people of the Paterson community through their duly elected members of their Board of Education. The board is more empowered now to act than it has been in 30 years, but we must always act with the needs of our students as our top priority. I thank Superintendent of Schools Eileen Shafer, Deputy Superintendent Susana Peron and everyone in the district administration for their efforts, and Governor Phil Murphy, State Acting Education Commissioner Dr. Angelica Allen-McMillan, former State Education Commissioner Dr. Lamont Repollet, N.J. Board of Education President Kathy Goldenberg and everyone who helped us achieve this great milestone for Paterson Public Schools.”

“Public schools are successful when parents, educational leaders, and local residents are able to have input to help provide support for their schools within a community. Today’s action fully restores the deserved academic decision-making to the people of Paterson,” **said State Board of Education President Kathy Goldenberg.** “I am confident that the Paterson community will utilize its talents, creative resources and vision to cement the foundation of success for each student within the district along with the leadership provided by their teaching staff, administrators, Superintendent Eileen Shafer and the Paterson Board of Education members.”

“Today is an important step worth celebrating. It speaks to the hard work that’s already been done and the progress that has already been made,” **said Sean Spiller, Vice President of the New Jersey Education Association.** “The best way to build upon that success to continue that progress: To listen, to hear, to understand that all the voices of those who know Paterson’s students best need to be heard.”

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