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State Board of Education Discusses Resolution to Continue State-Operation of Jersey City School District

The State Board of Education held its first discussion of a resolution to continue state operation in the Jersey City School District. The Jersey City schools have been operated by the state since 1989. When state-operation began Jersey City was meeting only 37% of the state's monitoring indicators. Now the district is meeting nearly all indicators and has demonstrated continued progress towards meeting benchmark goals in area of student achievement.

The board's resolution also continues the ability of the Jersey City State District Superintendent to exercise his veto powers in the areas of fiscal and budget matters. Last June, the State Board supported the relinquishing of the veto power of the State District Superintendent over fiscal and budget issues.

"When the State Board supported the State District Superintendent's decision to have the Jersey City Board of Education make its own decisions in fiscal and budget matters, it did so with the caveat that each member of the Jersey City BOE publicly swear to uphold the new code of ethical and professional conduct," said Commissioner of Education Vito A. Gagliardi, Sr. "However, since this has not occurred, it would be appropriate for the superintendent to continue his veto power over fiscal and budgetary matters at this time."

The Commissioner of Education also cannot recommend that the district be returned to local control until it receives state certification. The district cannot be certified by the state until the district is fully compliant with all areas of the evaluation code.

In addition, the transition to local control cannot be fully accomplished until the Legislature approves amendments to the state-operated school district law. A bill is presently in the Legislature that would allow state-operated school districts that are not fully certified to return to local control if they demonstrate continuous progress towards certification and the ability to resume governance.

"The Jersey City school district has come a long way since it was taken over by the state 12 years ago when children were receiving a low-quality education and the district was rife with patronage and corruption," said Dr. Gagliardi. "Today, the quality of education in Jersey City is the highest it's ever been. However, there are still some steps that must be completed before the district can return to local control. It is my hope that these steps will be completed by the district expeditiously."