



NJDOE News

Statement Regarding Superintendent Search
Newark School District
Dr. William L. Librera, Commissioner
April 3, 2003

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During the month of March, I concluded my investigation into the remaining allegations of impropriety regarding the Superintendent Search in Newark. These serious allegations along with others brought to my attention, have proven to have no basis that I have been able to find, for any conclusion that the process and the vote taken by the Newark Board of Education on February 25, 2003 was improper or invalid.

The objective of involving the elected Boards in Newark and Paterson has not changed from the announcement of the search process in June, 2002. This objective is a part of the overall effort to change the state takeover law and to begin the process of having the community be more responsible and accountable for important decisions made in the transition from state control to local control. To that end, public engagement and involvement are essential in moving the decision under specified conditions out of the Department in Trenton exclusively, to one made with the community through its elected officials. This part of the objective has been accomplished in Newark as public involvement and awareness has clearly increased.

The involvement of the public in meetings has, in a number of instances, degenerated into name calling and other forms of less than civil decorum. In addition to that undesirable aspect of increased public involvement, there remains the matter of the decision of five members providing the smallest expression of majority amid assertions that the community is largely behind the position taken by the four board members who constitute the minority portion. Both issues remain as problems and will need to be addressed.

My conclusions, and subsequent action, have been discussed with the State Board of Education in executive session on April 2, 2003. They are as follows:

- 1) All board members acted conscientiously in accordance with the process established and made their decision, to the extent of the information that I can verify, the way they believed is best for the district. No alleged improprieties have been substantiated.
- 2) There are two very talented educators, Ms. Bolden and Dr. Snead, under consideration. Although under normal circumstances badly split board decisions require reopening a search, I do not believe reopening for other candidates is appropriate in the Newark School District. A recommendation and a decision must be made.
- 3) There is nothing available to me or members of the Department of Education staff to suggest that we may find any clear direction or consensus for either candidate. My work during the month of March further confirms this. The vote by the present Board of Education will not change. Both Dr. Snead and Ms. Bolden remain very interested and clearly committed to leading the Newark School District.
- 4) Therefore, I will recommend, consistent with my stated intention in this process, the motion passed by the Newark Board on February 25, 2003 unless there is a change in the decision of the Board of Education after the April 15, 2003, election. The result of the election is the best information we will be able to get about the direction the community wants for the district. It must, I believe, be considered in making this important recommendation especially given the results will be available within two weeks. Regardless of whether there is a change in the position of the Board or not, I do not think it is possible for there to be an expression of consensus so I will make a recommendation even if the vote is 5-4 for either educator.
- 5) This recommendation will be made by me to the State no earlier than April 16, 2003, and more likely on May 7, 2003.

It must be understood that my process or recommendation does not obligate the State Board of Education, which has the final authority. The board has previously stated it would likely take one month to make its decision.