



STATE OF NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

For Immediate Release

Date: June 13, 2019

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Murphy Administration Approves Emergent Repairs to Camden's Veterans Memorial Family School

DOE and SDA Working Collaboratively with Community to Prevent Closure of School

Camden, NJ – The New Jersey Department of Education today announced it has approved emergent repairs at the Veterans Memorial Family School. The school was considered for closure due to building condition concerns, but will be able to remain open.

The plan for emergent repairs – which responds to input from local parents, students, teachers, and other community stakeholders – involved the collaboration of the Department of Education, state Superintendent Katrina McCombs, and the New Jersey Schools Development Authority.

“It is critical that students across our state are able access a high-quality education,” said Governor Phil Murphy. “By keeping Veterans Memorial Family School open, we are ensuring continued educational success for students in Camden and keeping a long-standing part of the community open. I am proud that my Administration has worked closely with the city to prevent the closure of this school.”

“This is an example of how officials at all levels, ranging from the Administration in Trenton to local school leaders in Camden, came together to listen to the voices of stakeholders in the community,” said Dr. Lamont O. Repollet, Commissioner of Education.

The Department of Education identified as the highest priorities the exterior walls, windows, a section of the roof, some interior repairs and exterior site work. The Schools Development Authority will now review the approved project scope for design specifications and determine the estimated cost of repairs.

“The Department is working closely with the Schools Development Authority to ensure students are provided a safe and secure learning environment,” said Kevin Dehmer, the Department of Education’s CFO/Assistant Commissioner for Finance. “Throughout this effort, the needs of the children were always at the forefront of every conversation.”

In addition to the structural repairs, the Department of Education’s Office of Innovations plans to work with district leaders and Camden teachers to develop Veterans Memorial Family School into a community school. The goal is to further transform the 90-year-old building into a centerpiece of the community, which could include offerings such as afterschool programs, services for local residents, and meeting space for civic groups.

The Department also continues to work closely with Camden school officials on approaches that will ensure fiscal stability for the district. For instance, the Department is looking to maximize the use of preschool funds, and more actively utilize federal funding to develop programs that foster social and emotional learning among students – an approach that would free local funds for other school programs and services. In addition, the Camden City School District, like any district in the state that demonstrates fiscal distress, has the opportunity to apply to the Department for emergency aid, which needs to be authorized in the state’s annual appropriations act.