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To:
CC:
Date: Thu, 7/14/2011 10:56:06 AM
Subject: Foundation for Florida's Future, Key Reads: 07/14/11

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NATIONAL NEWS

More Race to Top Winners Push Back Promises

Education Week

By: Michele McNeil

July 13, 2011

http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/campaign-k-12/2011/07/the_list_of_delays_states.html

The list of delays states are encountering in implementing their Race to the Top plans keeps getting longer.

Every state but Georgia has now amended its Race to the Top plan in some way, usually to push back a timeline or scale back an initiative. In all, the dozen winners from the \$4 billion competition have changed their plans, so far, 25 times, according to the [list of amendments](#) approved by the U.S. Department of Education. Remember, the winners were chosen based, at least in part, on their promises in those plans.

The changes includes a [32-page amendment](#) with dozens of changes to New York's plan, including one of the first amendments I've seen that doesn't just push back a timeline, but eliminates a small piece of the state's plan. That particular amendment eliminates a \$10 million program to provide competitive grants for charter school facilities in New York, and redistributes the money across a few other programs, including a general "school innovation fund." This may—or may not—be a big deal, but it's at least worth noting.

An [amendment to Maryland's plan](#) is postponing for a year full implementation of its new teacher evaluation system to allow districts more time to pilot it. The state also is delaying a couple of teacher incentive-pay programs and scaling back some of its professional development initiatives, including [summer academies](#) that were proposed to be five days covering four content areas, but ended up being three days worth of training covering two content areas.

We've told you about these implementation delays [before](#), and the Government Accountability Office also [flagged problems](#) states were encountering in a [recent status update](#) on Race to the Top.

This is only the beginning of implementation woes that are bound to plague such a high-profile, ambitious, and unique program. In fact, Hawaii could be headed toward a [major roadblock](#) as it struggles to adopt a new teacher evaluation system as it promised to do in its Race to the Top application.

For those out there who wonder if these states overpromised—and that's a very legitimate and important question—it's worth

pointing out that these states have four years to implement their plans. They won based on their previous student achievement track records, their education-reform landscape, and their plans for pushing reforms forward with millions of extra federal dollars. They did not get points, per se, for how quickly they would turn their plans into reality—so as long as they get the job done when the grant is up in four years, that seems to be what matters. Or is it?

States could, however, put themselves in a real bind by pushing everything back until the last minute. (Think of rising proficiency targets under No Child Left Behind, when many states backloaded their targets so they will have to make giant leaps in student achievement in these final years before the 2014 deadline for 100 percent proficiency.) But perhaps the folks with the most on the line are top officials at the U.S. Department of Education, and namely Secretary Arne Duncan. After all, Race to the Top is the signature education initiative of President Obama. So the pressure's on.

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Schools Chiefs See a Path to Proposing Their Own Accountability Systems

New York Times

By: Winnie Hu

July 12, 2011

http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/13/education/13educ.html?_r=1

Some state education chiefs say that if Congress does not overhaul [No Child Left Behind](#), the main federal law governing public education, by the fall, they may be allowed to propose their own accountability systems as an alternative.

These education chiefs said this week that Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and his aides have signaled that they may grant a waiver on a crucial provision in the law, a requirement that all children be proficient in English and math by 2014, a goal widely seen as unrealistic.

Other provisions that the administration might be willing to relax include a requirement that districts identify and address schools that do not make “adequate yearly progress” toward specific goals and restrictions on how some federal education money must be spent.

In exchange for being freed from these requirements, states would have to propose their own accountability rules and ways they would intervene in underperforming schools, these state education chiefs said they had been told.

Kevin S. Huffman, the Tennessee education commissioner, said administration officials “have been crystal clear that it would not be a waiver for everyone, but for states who are positioned to engage in meaningful reform with real accountability.”

Mr. Huffman added, “They are not saying we’re going to waive school-by-school interventions and let you just make up something.”

The state education chiefs said they envisioned state accountability systems that placed more weight on student “growth” — that is, individual performance on state tests from year to year — and possibly other factors, like high school graduation rates and participation in Advanced Placement courses, as ways to measure student achievement.

Under No Child Left Behind, schools are largely measured by students’ performance on standardized tests, and by the performance of certain subgroups of disadvantaged students.

“The biggest criticism about No Child Left Behind is the pass-fail,” said Hanna Skandera, secretary of education in New Mexico, who supports the law and hopes for more flexibility to make improvements. In 2010, 77 percent of the 827 public schools in New Mexico failed to make adequate yearly progress. “You either make A.Y.P. or you don’t,” Ms. Skandera said. “We’re not able to capture differences.”

The administration’s suggestion of waivers has already drawn opposition from Congressional leaders, including Representative John Kline, a Minnesota Republican who is chairman of the House education committee. They have challenged Mr. Duncan’s legal authority to demand certain reforms in exchange for waivers, saying that it would undermine Congress’s efforts to enact more lasting changes.

But some education advocates say the waivers are a realistic alternative to a comprehensive overhaul of the law, provided that states are still held accountable for raising achievement for all children and closing the gaps that separate poor and minority students from their peers.

“This does provide an opportunity, but only if done well,” said Daria Hall, a policy director for the [Education Trust](#), an advocacy group in Washington. “This can’t be about letting states off the hook. It has to be about setting a high bar for states and granting flexibility to those who are willing and able to do it.”

John B. King, [New York’s education commissioner](#), said that while New York has not made any specific proposals to federal education officials, he would be interested in exploring an accountability system that looked at student growth as well as

proficiency in science and social studies. (No Child Left Behind focuses primarily on English and math). "My sense is that they're trying to determine whether to have minimum criteria for accountability proposals, and if they were to have them, what they should be," Mr. King said.

Some states like Indiana and Tennessee have already moved to develop their own accountability systems factoring in student growth, among other things, but they are still required under federal law to assess schools based on No Child Left Behind. The result in Tennessee has been that education officials "feel like our reforms are being splintered across multiple reporting structures," Mr. Huffman said.

In Indiana, where schools are now graded from A to F, Tony Bennett, the state superintendent of public instruction, said that he would like to see every school — even high-performing ones — focus on raising achievement among the lowest 25 percent of students. Mr. Bennett said he would also give more weight to teacher effectiveness over how many academic degrees or years of experience teachers have.

"I'm a strong supporter of accountability measures," he said. "But since No Child Left Behind was enacted, we have new accountability measures, and we should build more around them."

Lillian Lowery, Delaware's secretary of education, said more flexibility in spending federal aid and helping failing schools would allow her state to try more creative approaches, like language immersion elementary programs, summer classes in science, math and engineering, and educational games.

"We drill and we re-teach, but it's more of the same for them," Ms. Lowery said. "So what can we do to hook them so they're interested and they learn?"

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FLORIDA NEWS

Duval one step closer to losing control of four public schools

Florida Times-Union

By: Topher Sanders

July 13, 2011

<http://jacksonville.com/news/florida/2011-07-13/story/duval-one-step-closer-losing-control-four-public-schools#ixzz1S5EVVHCr>

Duval one step closer to losing control of four public schools

The Duval County Public Schools' appeal to maintain control of its four worst-performing schools has been recommended for denial by state Education Commissioner John Winn.

The four schools — Andrew Jackson, Raines, Ribault high schools and North Shore K-8 — will be handed over to the district-created nonprofit Duval Partners for Excellent Education if the State Board of Education votes to follow Winn's recommendation.

The state board, which has a history of following the commissioner's recommendation, will vote on the appeal on Tuesday in Tampa.

If the appeal fails, the four intervene schools would be run by a Miami Lakes company that is asking about \$2.1 million annually for the job.

Intervene schools are the lowest performing schools in the state. Duval's intervene schools face closure if they do not improve in the next two years.

The Miami-Dade County school system also appealed on behalf of two of its intervene schools, and Winn recommended its appeal be rejected as well.

Duval Superintendent Ed Pratt-Dannals said in a statement that he was disappointed by Winn's recommendation but looked forward to making the district's case in Tampa.

School Board Chairman W.C. Gentry has said the district would consider legal action against the state if its appeal was denied.

Duval Partners Chairman Cleve Warren said Winn's recommendation just means his organization continues working.

"We have to continue with the expectation that we're going to have four schools to work with," he said. "The last thing that I would want to do is for us to waste time between now and the 19th."

Warren said Duval Partners will use the time to go through the district's proposed contract that would outline Duval Partners' managerial role line by line. The School Board has not approved a contract but has already agreed to give the organization \$250,000 in startup funding.

Warren's group has selected National Academic Educational Partners as the potential management entity to run the schools if the appeal fails. The company said it can run each school for about \$530,000 annually, or about \$2.1 million for all four, Warren

said.

Most of the money would come from taxpayers; the rest coming from donations.

Duval Partners has selected former School Board Chairwoman Brenda Priestly Jackson as the group's executive director. Warren said Priestly Jackson has yet to present a desired compensation package to the group. Priestly Jackson served on the School Board for eight years. Three of the four intervene schools were in her district.

Duval Partners, which has met in private for four months, will have its first open meeting at 10 a.m. Monday at the Schultz Center. Warren said their agenda will include reviewing the proposed contract and possibly include a discussion of Priestly Jackson's salary, if she presents her request prior to the meeting.

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Changes in Florida law make it easier to take classes online

Florida Times-Union

By: Mary Kelli Palka

July 13, 2011

<http://jacksonville.com/news/florida/2011-07-13/story/changes-florida-law-make-it-easier-take-classes-online#ixzz1S5Bs7kdJ>

Changes in Florida law make it easier to take classes online

For some students, a few virtual classes in addition to a traditional school environment is just perfect.

Some prefer to go virtual full-time.

For the 2011-12 school year, both groups will get their way thanks to changes in Florida law that offer students more virtual school options.

Now students in most grades K-12 are no longer required to have a year of public school education before enrolling full-time in virtual classes. In addition, entering ninth-graders must have at least one virtual class before they graduate.

Duval County parent Bert Herring found that his eldest daughter taking foreign language classes online allowed her to fit calculus and physics classes into her schedule at Douglas Anderson School of the Arts before she graduated in 2010.

And if it wasn't for the social part of school, Herring could see his youngest daughter, entering seventh grade at LaVilla School of the Arts this year, going virtual full-time. Instead, she'll take virtual classes as she needs them. Herring said he's found the virtual classes his daughters have taken to be high quality and far from easy, and he likes that they have the virtual options.

Orange County parent Kathy Zimmermann, who's also a teacher, loves the full-time option for her almost 14-year-old daughter. The entering 10th-grader is a competitive gymnast, and Zimmermann said a full-time virtual class schedule would help her get in practice time.

What's new

The changes in law give families more options. Here are some highlights.

Full-time enrollment:

It used to be that students had to enroll in public school for the prior year before enrolling in Florida Virtual School Full Time, a partnership between Florida Virtual School and Connections Academy. But the law changed so kindergarten and first-graders, as well as sixth- through 12th-graders, can now directly enroll in the full-time program without having to go through a public school district. An important note, second- through fifth-graders are still required to have been enrolled in public school the year prior to enrolling in the full-time virtual school. Exceptions include children who have siblings already in district virtual programs and military dependents who transferred to Florida within the past 12 months.

Requirements: Entering ninth-graders this year must complete at least one virtual class before they graduate.

Courses offerings: Many classes, from basic math, science and history classes to advanced placement courses. The curriculum and class content must meet state standards. Florida Virtual School Full Time students will have to take the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test, and the school will get a school grade.

Accelerated classes: Starting this year, the state is allowing some students in fourth and fifth grade to begin taking middle school-level virtual classes.

Diplomas: Florida Virtual School Full Time will begin offering high school students a diploma in 2012-13.

Who offers courses: At the state level, Florida Virtual School has a classic and full-time option for all students (private school, public school and those in home school). Also, each district offers virtual school options, sometimes by contracting with a state-approved private provider.

To find out more: Visit www.flvs.net for more information.

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Miami-Dade Schools chief Carvalho vows to keep 2 schools open

Miami Times

By: Kathleen McGrory

July 13, 2011

<http://www.miamiherald.com/2011/07/12/2313421/miami-dade-schools-chief-carvalho.html#ixzz1S5CMIHfv>

Miami-Dade schools Superintendent Alberto Carvalho on Wednesday affirmed his commitment to saving two Miami-Dade high schools threatened with closure — and got permission from the School Board to manage a new charter school opening three campuses this fall.

The charter school would be a first-of-its-kind arrangement in Florida.

Charter schools are funded by tax dollars, but run by independent governing boards that are usually separate from the local school board. Some are run by for-profit entities.

The new school will be called the Academy for International Education and will have campuses in Miami Springs, Hialeah and South Miami. The nonprofit organization that holds the charter will hire the school district to develop its curriculum, build the budget and oversee its day-to-day operation.

The move comes as Carvalho is fighting for the survival of two iconic traditional high schools: Miami Central and Miami Edison.

The state Department of Education has said the schools must either close or become charter schools because they did not meet requirements for improvement under a strict state regulation.

Carvalho said closing the schools is not an option.

“There is a greater chance of the crown of Spain reclaiming Florida than us shutting down Central or Edison,” the superintendent told a group of about 100 students and teachers gathered at Edison on Wednesday. “It will not happen.”

Carvalho has asked the state Board of Education for a waiver that would allow Central and Edison to remain open as traditional public schools.

The state board will consider the issue at a meeting Tuesday in Tampa.

Roberto Martinez, vice chairman of the board, said he supports granting the waiver.

“There is no alternative to the very credible plan that the Miami-Dade already district has in place in these two schools,” Martinez said.

Many top Republican lawmakers, including Gov. Rick Scott, have expressed strong support for charter schools.

Central and Edison have made dramatic improvements in student achievement since 2008. Both saw their graduation rate soar and their state-issued letter grades jump from F to C.

In March, President Barack Obama held up Central as a national model for education reform.

But both schools fell short of the standard for progress under the federal No Child Left Behind law and lagged the state in academic achievement and improvement. As a result, the state Department of Education is imposing the strict sanctions.

Carvalho said education policy-makers should consider the disconnect between federal and state standards.

“The process is fundamentally broken,” he said.

The news that Central and Edison might face serious sanctions shocked many in the community.

“If progress is being made, why are we talking about closing the school?” asked Marleine Bastien, the founder and executive director of Haitian Women of Miami.

Equally as surprised were the teenagers who attend the schools.

“I don’t understand how this is happening,” said Tavon Kellman, a 17-year-old junior at Edison. “We got a C last year. We all thought Edison had turned around.”

Late Wednesday, elected officials and civic leaders held a rally outside the school district offices in downtown Miami. Dozens of students and alumni attended, many wearing T-shirts featuring the schools’ colors and mascots.

United Teachers of Dade President Karen Aronowitz spoke out against allowing for-profit charter school companies to take over

Central and Edison.

“Now that these schools have top facilities, state officials want to swoop in and give them to their cronies,” Aronowitz said. “This is about taking public education away from our communities.”

Said state Sen. Oscar Branyon, who organized the rally: “We’re not going to let that happen.”

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STATE NEWS

Top teacher calls for end to tenure

Baton Rouge Advocate

By: Staff

July 14, 2011

<http://theadvocate.com/news/education/362304-70/top-teacher-calls-for-end.html>

Louisiana’s 2010 teacher of the year said Wednesday that teacher tenure should be abolished.

“We need to get rid of it as soon as we possibly can,” said Holly Boffy, who won the award as an educator at Paul Breaux Middle School in Lafayette.

Boffy, who plans to run for the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education this fall, made her comments during a question-and-answer session after she addressed the Rotary Club of Baton Rouge.

Under current rules, teachers earn job security — it is called tenure — after three years on the job, if they meet certain standards. But Boffy said the rules mean that, if teachers clear all the hurdles after three years, they essentially have a job for good.

“There are individuals who take advantage of that situation,” she said.

In a brief interview, Boffy acknowledged that any effort to change the state’s tenure laws would be controversial. “It is a very tough subject,” she said.

“But when you start looking at what is in the best interests of children, then you know the answer,” Boffy said.

“And it is not in the best interest of children,” she said of tenure.

Earlier this year, Chas Roemer, a member of BESE, launched a bid to abolish the state’s teacher tenure law, which he said protects poorly performing teachers. However, that effort failed to generate any action. In addition, a bill to revamp Louisiana’s teacher tenure law died last year amid opposition.

Backers of teacher tenure contend it protects educators from unfair firings.

In the interview, Boffy said she plans to run for the District 7 BESE seat from southwest Louisiana held by Dale Bayard of Lake Charles. Bayard declined comment on Boffy’s views on tenure.

The post is one of eight BESE seats on the ballot this year. Three others are named by the governor.

Boffy, who spent 10 years as a classroom teacher, told the Rotary Club she left the profession because her 4-year-old son has a bone disorder that requires more job flexibility than she had as a teacher.

She is director of professional development and university programs for the Associated Professional Educators of Louisiana, called APEL.

That group is one of three teacher organizations in Louisiana but often differs with the views of the Louisiana Federation of Teachers, known as LFT, and the Louisiana Association of Educators, called LAE.

Leaders of the LFT and LAE have denounced efforts to abolish teacher tenure.

In her comments to the Rotary Club, Boffy touted the work of a nonprofit group called Dream Teachers.

The organization includes business groups and others that work with the state Department of Education to elevate the annual teacher and principal of the year programs.

It also sponsors an annual symposium on education topics.

Boffy told the group that, aside from teachers, judges and university professors are nearly the only other jobs that offer tenure.

“That doesn’t help my profession to be viewed as a profession,” Boffy said of teachers.

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California board OKs rules giving parents school power

Associated Press

By: Adam Weintraub

July 13, 2011

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/n/a/2011/07/13/state/n121652D16.DTL&>

The California Board of Education on Wednesday unanimously approved a new set of rules known as a "parent trigger" law, giving parents more power to force changes at poorly performing public schools.

The regulations were approved before a packed meeting room in Sacramento. Parents who had taken buses from across the state erupted in cheers.

The rules would allow a majority of parents at low-performing schools to petition school districts for major changes, from adding programs or converting it to a charter school to firing the principal, cutting half the staff or shutting it down.

The action isn't the final word, however. The proposed regulations will be put out for public comment for 15 days and could be challenged.

If no new substantive issues arise, the regulations would take effect, providing a set of guidelines for parents who want to force changes at their school.

"We want not just parental involvement, we want true power" to help guide the education of children, said former state Sen. Gloria Romero, the Democratic co-author of the legislation that led to the rules.

Dozens of parents joined the education groups to address the board, most of them calling for quick approval of the third version of the so-called "parent-trigger" rules.

"Without clear regulations, we can't use this power," said Casondra Perry of Los Angeles. Her 8-year-old son will start the fourth grade this year as a gifted student in one of the lowest-performing schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District, she said.

The rules and the larger push for parent power have been controversial.

A petition to convert a Compton Unified School District elementary school into a charter school has wound up in court. Last week, four parents from around the state filed an ethics complaint against state Board of Education member Patricia Rucker, saying she has previously worked on behalf of the California Teachers Association union and should not vote on the issue.

Rucker voted in favor of the revised rules on Wednesday. Afterward, she said the petition against her contained inaccurate information, she has no conflict of interest and she has never expressed an opinion on the parent-trigger rules.

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Michigan House Speaker Jase Bolger says pension reform is next on K-12 education agenda for lawmakers

Kalamazoo Gazette The Kalamazoo Gazette

By: Julie Mack

July 14, 2011

http://www.mlive.com/news/kalamazoo/index.ssf/2011/07/michigan_house_speaker_jase_bo_3.html

LANSING — Whether Michigan school districts will see more funding next year will depend on the state's economy, but lawmakers are working on pension reforms to free up money for Michigan K-12 classrooms, state House Speaker Jase Bolger, R-Marshall, said Wednesday.

"I don't want (school districts) to count on more money next year. ... But our hope is that when the economy improves, those budgets will improve," Bolger said.

Bolger and other Republican lawmakers are being vilified in education circles for cutting \$700 million from the state's K-12 budget in fiscal 2012. But he said school officials should give credit to the Republican-controlled Legislature for passing tenure reform bills as well as other legislation that public school officials have been seeking for years to help contain costs.

Conversation with Jase Bolger Michigan House Speaker Jase Bolger met with Kalamazoo Gazette Publisher Jim Stephanak, Editor Rebecca Pierce and Staff Writer Julie Mack. Mack is asking the questions. Watch video

That includes capping health-care costs for public-sector employers, making it easier for school districts to obtain competitive bids for health care, and forcing union employees to absorb the increase in the health-care costs if a contract expires without a new contract in place.

"Our goal is to make schools better" by giving school officials "the tools they need" to better contain costs and improve teacher

quality, Bolger said Wednesday during an hourlong discussion with the Kalamazoo Gazette in his office at the state Capitol.

"The whole point was to face reality," he said of the Republicans' 2011 agenda this spring on education. "I don't think the past 10 years were helpful, where schools got marginal increases in funding, and there was not an attempt to contain costs."

Bolger acknowledged their actions have angered many in Michigan's education community.

While school officials may be privately cheering him on for the cost-containment and tenure measures, they've been publicly bashing Republicans for cutting K-12 funding to help balance the state budget.

Meanwhile, the Michigan Education Association, the state's largest teachers union and the biggest target of the reform legislation, has been outspoken in its outrage, accusing Bolger and the GOP lawmakers of "union-busting," and expressing support for recall drives that target Bolger, Gov. Rick Snyder and other Republican leaders.

Many educators and others are especially infuriated that the Republicans diverted a surplus in the School Aid Fund to balance the state budget, while creating a new tax on pensions to finance a \$1.5 billion business tax cut. The MEA and others say that proves Republican lawmakers care more about corporate interests than children and senior citizens.

A common narrative in the school community is that Republican lawmakers are deliberately seeking to undermine public education to further a conservative agenda of promoting school vouchers and charters.

"That kind of demagoguery is really unfortunate," and it's not true, Bolger said. "My two children are in public schools. I went through the public school system. I have great appreciation for public education."

He said the K-12 spending cut was needed to stabilize state finances, while the tax cut is necessary to create a better climate for job growth.

"People have been delving into what we're doing instead of why we're doing it," he said.. "The whole focus is jobs."

Going forward from here, Bolger said, the next item on the education agenda is pension reform. School districts must make mandatory contributions to the Michigan Public School Employees Retirement System based on their payroll and, in 2011-12, that rate is almost 25 percent of payroll costs.

"It's crippling their budgets," he said about the retirement contribution.

Bolger said he and others are still looking at what the reforms would involve, although "we have to respect the promises we've made to current employees."

A likely outcome is converting new school employees to a defined-contribution plan, and the 2011-12 budget includes money set aside to help finance such a conversion, he said.

One area reform that Republicans are unlikely to push is school consolidation, Bolger said.

Michigan has 551 K-12 school districts and about 200 more K-8 systems. Some have said that having so many districts is fiscally inefficient, but Bolger said it's clear that consolidation is unpopular in many communities.

"What I've heard loud and clear is that's a decision that should be made locally," he said, although lawmakers have provided incentives for districts to share services.

He also expressed reluctance about spending more tax dollars on social programs for early childhood. He acknowledged the research that shows the value of early intervention services, but also he sees it as an area where government programs intrude on the role of the private and nonprofit sectors.

"It's a very difficult balance," he said. "Kids go hungry, so schools start feeding them. Kids get in trouble after school, so there's after-school problems. Parents don't read to kids at home, so we give reading help at school. Parents don't get kids ready for kindergarten, so we need preschool."

"We turn to schools to do the things that parents aren't doing" and it builds an expectation in parents that it's really the schools' responsibility, Bolger said. "It's an unintended consequence of government doing too much."

This doesn't mean that the state won't expand early childhood programs, he added, "but my point is we need to be very careful."

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Detroit Public Schools taps charter school leader Ross to head its program

Detroit News

By: Jennifer Chambers

July 14, 2011

<http://www.detnews.com/article/20110714/SCHOOLS/107140402/1026/schools/DPS-taps-charter-school-leader-Ross-to-head-its-program>

Detroit — Doug Ross, a well-respected and highly successful charter school operator in Detroit, is taking his talents to Detroit Public Schools as director of charter schools.

A former U.S. assistant secretary of labor as well as founder and CEO of the University Preparatory Academy in Detroit, Ross accepted the appointment Wednesday by DPS Emergency Manager Roy Roberts during a news conference at the district's Fisher Building headquarters.

Ross' organization, New Urban Learning, runs seven charter schools in the city, including the highly successful University Preparatory Academy, which had a 94 percent graduation rate in 2010. It is one of the few charter schools to consistently outperform DPS academically.

In his new position, Ross will head an office that is expanding the ranks of DPS-authorized charter schools from nine to 14 this fall and is to include a second phase of charter conversions in 2012-13.

Roberts said University Prep sends 90 percent of its graduates to post-secondary institutions. He wants Ross to replicate those results at DPS, which once had a 44 percent graduation rate and now has a rate of 62 percent, according to the most recent statistics from the Michigan Department of Education.

"Mr. Ross will lead efforts to make certain that DPS-authorized charters will be subject to the most stringent oversight aimed at raising and keeping these schools at the top of the list of high-performing schools in the city of Detroit," Roberts said.

Ross, a former DPS high school teacher and Mumford High School graduate, said he was inspired when Roberts, a former General Motors executive, left retirement in May to take on the job of turning around DPS.

Ross said some observers see education in Detroit as "an epic good-versus-evil battle between traditional schools and public charter schools."

"They will see my coming as an episode in that struggle. It is not. It's not what I care about or believe is important," Ross said.

"What Detroit urgently needs is more good schools, regardless of who runs them."

Tonya Allen, vice president of the Skillman Foundation in Detroit, said Ross is a local talent who understands the challenges of educating urban children.

"Doug has been a critic of the district for many years, and rightfully so. This gives him an opportunity to work inside DPS and help it build its capacity to better serve children in Detroit," she said.

DPS is downsizing as it struggles with declining enrollment, excess building capacity and a \$327 million budget deficit.

In a turnaround plan touted this spring by then-Emergency Manager Robert Bobb as "transformational" for DPS, the district was to find charter operators for up to 18 schools by fall and up to 27 others for the 2012-13 school year. The moves were to save up to \$99 million in operational costs for DPS.

Last month, Roberts said the district had chosen three operators to run five new DPS-authorized charter schools this fall.

The district has lost 100,000 students in the past decade to outside charter schools, suburban schools and urban flight and has excess building capacity.

Billie Wimmer, with the Michigan Council of Charter School Authorizers, said Ross has a deep commitment to children in Detroit and across the state.

"He really expects excellence where he has been before. Those expectations have given him great results," she said.

Ross will report directly to Roberts and begin work at DPS after Labor Day, the district said.

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