



News Release

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Discussions to Begin on Establishing Partnership Agreements with 8 Districts

March 10, 2017

LANSING –State Superintendent Brian Whiston and the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) will be entering into discussions with eight school districts to develop Partnership Agreements with the goal of improving achievement levels at the lowest-performing schools in Michigan.

“These will be positive, yet pressing, conversations with the leaders of these districts to get their lowest performing schools back on track,” Whiston said. “We want to provide as many local and state-level partners to help students in these schools be successful.”

Once an agreement is reached, the state School Reform Office has agreed to delay any next level of accountability actions with the schools, such as possible closure, in order to give the Partnership Model an opportunity to be successful.

Whiston will be arranging initial meetings with the following school districts: Benton Harbor; Bridgeport-Spaulding; Detroit Public Community Schools/Education Achievement Authority; Kalamazoo, Muskegon Heights; Pontiac, River Rouge; and Saginaw.

Whiston said this is meant only as a positive opportunity to work together under the leadership of the local superintendent and the local board of education to improve student achievement and outcomes, with an explicit and detailed understanding between all partners.

With multiple partners at the table – including local board members, the intermediate school district, education organizations, tribal education councils, business, community members, parents, higher education organizations, foundations – work will ensue to identify a plan of supports and interventions that will improve student outcomes.

Academic outcomes are a primary focus, and other whole child outcomes that can impede improved academics like health, nutrition, behavior, social/emotional issues also will be addressed.

Under a Partnership Agreement, the local district remains in total control of its schools with support from MDE and partners. The districts have until the end of April to reach an agreement. If no agreement is reached, the next level of accountability would be implemented.

MDE will be providing resources for the districts to utilize in identifying their needs and a plan to improve. These include: needs assessment tools, evidence-based practices, draft Partnership Agreement, lists of potential partners and contact information.

Each Partnership District will be assigned a liaison from MDE. This person will be responsible for supporting the district in implementation of its agreement; helping resolve problems and breaking down barriers; facilitating discussions and meetings; and ensuring that the Partnership District receives maximum support for success from MDE, as well as from the partners and other state agencies.

This Partnership Model puts a broad spectrum of technical expertise and resources in the hands of the struggling school district, and allows local districts to use community and state-level support systems to drive improvement and self-accountability. The ultimate benefit would be to regenerate a struggling school to be one that helps students and teachers achieve at higher levels.

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