



## **Recommendations Regarding the Normandy School District**

### **Presented to the State Board of Education**

**May 20, 2014**

For the past several years, the Normandy community, the Department, the legislature, and others have been engaged in and with the Normandy School District to improve educational outcomes for children and to determine the best possible course of action to ensure quality schools for the children of the Normandy community. From the beginning, all parties shared a common interest in keeping and supporting the continued operation of schools in Normandy.

Throughout this process, the following facts have been considered:

1. Staying the course will result in the district becoming bankrupt on June 30, 2014. There are sufficient funds to meet all outstanding obligations, but there will not be sufficient income to operate next year and meet all obligations as currently prescribed.
2. We won't know for certain what the APR for 2014 will indicate until late summer. Even with improvement, performance results for a single year are not sufficient to compensate for a decade of low performance.
3. The State Board of Education has the authority under current law to review district governance to establish the conditions under which the existing school board shall continue to govern; or determine the date the district shall lapse and determine an alternative governing structure for the district.

The State Board has the following options:

- Option A: Allow continued governance by the existing school district board of education under terms and conditions established by the State Board of Education.
  - Option B: Lapse the corporate organization of the district and replace the elected board with a special administrative board (SAB) that operates independently, without direct oversight of the State Board of Education and Department.
  - Option C: Lapse and determine an alternate governance structure under direct oversight of the State Board of Education.
  - Option D: Lapse the district and attach the territory of the lapsed district to one or more districts or divide the district into multiple school districts within the territory of the lapsed district.
4. Under current law, the district will not have sufficient funds to support an instructional program for the children remaining in Normandy, while meeting financial obligations including the cost of transfers. This eliminates Options A and B. Under the proposed legislation in Senate Bill 493, this financial picture could change, but it's impossible to forecast at this time.

5. Option D—attaching the district to a neighboring district or dividing the district up and attaching pieces to other districts is not a viable option. In every case, the addition of all or a portion of the Normandy population would put the receiving district in or very close to an unaccredited status. Plus, and perhaps most important, the overwhelming consensus among all parties is that the primary goal is to provide quality schools in the Normandy community. Option D would preclude that possibility.
6. That leaves Option C—lapsing and determining an alternate governance structure under direct oversight of the State Board of Education. It is the only feasible option that allows us to continue to maintain schools in Normandy. In addition, the uncertainty regarding the future of Senate Bill 493 is another argument for Option C and continued state oversight. It is the only option that allows the State Board of Education to make adjustments to future changes in the law.
7. The Normandy Transition Task Force came to the same conclusion. Further, they suggest a series of actions that the Department has considered carefully in making our recommendations. Again, the emphasis is on maintaining and improving schools in the Normandy community.
8. The Normandy community has been clear on their expectations and wishes. They want:
  - **Schools in their community,**
  - **Quality education for every child, and**
  - **Support from the Department, the State and others.**

The Task Force offered some excellent guiding principles to use in the work ahead. These include:

- The governance and leadership of a school district should ensure it has the capacity needed to succeed.
- The governance and leadership of the school district should be provided all available supports to ensure the school district develops the internal capacity needed to successfully implement a plan for renewal.
- The governance and leadership of the school district shall request all available external resources and supports to ensure the school district develops the capacity needed to succeed.
- The governance and leadership of the Normandy School District or its successor entity should be accountable to, and shall enfranchise, empower, and engage the system constituents.
- Schools and educators should have more autonomy to run schools as long as they have shared performance goals for measures such as:
  - o Academic achievement and performance of students,
  - o Discipline referrals based on equitable and restorative justice principles,
  - o Special Education Services provided,
  - o Student Retention;
  - o Drop-out Reduction;
  - o Graduation; and
  - o Referrals to alternative education.
- There is a shared desire for the system to have access to wrap-around services, so students can go to school healthy, well fed, and well-supported.
- A community should have access to high quality pre-K education.
- The system should foster multiple types of school programs and themes incorporated into a system-wide cohesive curriculum and accountability process.
- Normandy residents should have access to a unified system of high-quality schools that hold students to high expectations.

- Schools should be held meaningfully and fairly accountable to “. . . parents as full partners in decisions affecting their children and families . . .” MO Rev. Stat. §167.700.

Based on these facts, the feedback we’ve received all year, and recommendations of the Normandy Transition Task Force, we are recommending that the State Board of Education:

- Lapse the Normandy School District effective June 30, 2014, with direct oversight by the State Board of Education effective immediately. All existing contracts with personnel and others will be terminated effective June 30, 2014.
- Create the *Normandy Schools Collaborative* (NSC) as a new local education agency (LEA), encompassing the Normandy School District footprint effective July 1, 2014.
- Appoint a Joint Executive Governing Board (JEGB) to govern the *Collaborative* effective July 1, 2014. The JEGB will consist of 5-7 individuals appointed by the State Board of Education.

In the next few weeks, the Department will be working closely with the superintendent and key central office staff to examine and consider the remaining recommendations from the Task Force including a structure for ongoing community-based innovation with carefully monitored benchmarks; options for school choice and/or alternative school models; transitional classrooms; and others. Immediately, plans will be made to develop:

- a focus for the instructional program;
- a schedule and calendar for the 2014-2015 school year;
- a preliminary budget;
- a staffing plan; and
- new contracts for essential services, and other urgent matters that require immediate attention.

The next round of recommendations will include:

- The appointment of 5-7 individuals to serve on the JEGB, with one appointed as the Chairman, effective July 1, 2014 for a three-year term to expire on June 30, 2017.
- Adopting a preliminary budget for the 2014-2015 fiscal year for the *Normandy Schools Collaborative* (NSC).
- Adopting a calendar for the 2014-2015 school year which serves as an interim step to a year-round calendar for 2015-2016, with extended hours and extended days.
- Adopting a preliminary plan for transition year activities with the intent of transitioning State Board of Education authority to the JEGB fully by June 30, 2015. The JEGB will then govern the *Normandy Schools Collaborative* with the advice and consent of the State Board of Education.

The intent is to support:

- **Schools in the Normandy community.**
- **Quality education for every child.**
- **Support from the Department, the State and others.**

It is important to note that in order to ensure continuity and stability, many, if not most, of the existing staff will be offered new contracts for 2014-2015. It is too late to replace the entire staff in time to start school in August. With Board action at the June board meeting, necessary staff will be offered new contracts by June 16. Going forward, contracts will be determined by intensive evaluation and professional development.

For this plan to work, everyone will have to shoulder their share of the responsibility and contribute to the outcome. The body of the Task Force report contains excellent foundational thinking by which the

JEGB and the Superintendent can launch the transition. Other partners—those already involved in the existing district and new—should be sure to align assistance with the needs of the *Normandy Schools Collaborative*.

The failure of Normandy to serve their children well is more than the foibles of past local administrations or school boards. It's more than the action or inaction of the legislature. It's more than poverty or race or dysfunction in families. It's a fundamental issue that we, as a state, must confront and solve. Every child has a right to a quality education. Every parent has the right to want a quality education for their child. The courts have said that if they can't get it where they live, their parents have the right to send them somewhere else. What would you do if it was YOUR child we were talking about?

I have confidence that Normandy can and will improve. But it will take bold innovation and significant change. Business as usual will not be sufficient. The problem is urgent and it is ours, not just theirs. The failure is Missouri's, not just that of a struggling community.

Together we can ensure not only that Normandy has schools in their community, but that all of us can be proud of those schools. Positive results will provide an example for other communities struggling to provide quality education in theirs.