

District Reorganization Focuses on Instructional Leadership

Plan calls for more hands-on involvement in schools by District administrators

In a move designed to build on the success demonstrated by the Empowerment Schools model, Superintendent Arlene Ackerman announced fundamental changes to the school district's regional structure that will focus all district administrators, departments and functions on the work of school improvement.

Dr. Ackerman said this year's test results, especially dramatic gains in achievement at Empowerment Schools, yielded powerful lessons. "The improvements underscore that leadership matters. When district administrators get out of their offices, into schools and work in partnership with principals, everyone's capacity to know and do better grows and yields results."

She added, "We are intentionally reorganizing to align our structure with our Imagine 2014 goals. The regional structure is being changed to provide coherency in the implementation of programs and resources at the elementary, middle and high schools levels. By assigning successful principals who have recently demonstrated strong, capable, and proven administrative leadership at the different instructional levels, it is our intent to capitalize upon that expertise to better support schools."

While the regional superintendent structure will no longer exist, the regional office facilities will reopen this fall as Parent and Family Resource Centers designed to provide one stop services for parents who need assistance with enrollment, language assessment or other school related matters.

To leverage the strategic placement of central office leadership to garner more dramatic results, Ackerman is appointing three associate superintendents as primary instructional leaders. The roles are critical to the mission of serving and supporting our schools:

1. Tomas Hanna, will now serve as the associate superintendent of academic supports; and,
2. David Weiner, former chief of accountability will become the associate superintendent of academics and curriculum.

The third appointee, Penny Nixon, will assume the key role of associate superintendent of schools. Ms. Nixon, who began her career at the Gillespie Middle School in 1993, has served children, the district and our city with great distinction. After ten years as a classroom teacher, she became principal of Wagner Middle School. Widely recognized as a skillful and highly motivating instructional leader, she quickly rose through the ranks from principal to assistant regional superintendent to regional superintendent. Ms. Nixon is a Temple University graduate who also earned a Master's degree in education at the University of Pennsylvania where she is now a doctoral candidate in educational leadership.

Reporting to Associate Superintendent Nixon will be 9 assistant superintendents. Promoted to the role of assistant superintendent for elementary education are:

1. Elois Dupree, former principal of the Spring Garden School;
2. Pat Mazzuca, former principal of Juniata Park Academy;
3. Anna Jenkins, former principal of the Cook-Wissahickon School;
4. Emmanuel Caulk, former assistant regional superintendent for the south region; and,
5. Pamela Brown, former interim chief academic officer

John Frangipani, former chief of school operations, will become the assistant superintendent for middle schools.

Linda Cliatt-Wayman, former principal of the Young Women's Leadership Academy at Rhodes High School, has been named assistant superintendent for high schools.

Francisco Duran, former central east regional superintendent, is now the assistant superintendent for Promise Academies, as reported earlier.

Ben Wright, who currently serves as regional superintendent for alternative education, effectively remains in his role but as the assistant superintendent for alternative education.

The strategic goal is to expand a model of leadership that led to significant academic gains in the district's Empowerment Schools where central office leadership and cross-functional teams of central office experts gave powerful, almost daily, support to teaching and learning. Associate Superintendent of Schools Penny Nixon will ensure that central offices work closely with school principals with a clear and simple focus on school improvement and student success.

At the end of July, Ackerman also announced the following appointments and positions:

- Diane Castelbuono, former Deputy Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education for the Pennsylvania Department of Education, to Associate Superintendent of Strategic Programs, including charter, turnaround and renaissance schools;
- Lucy Feria, former Superintendent of the North Region, to Deputy Chief of Multilingual Curriculum and Programs;
- Karen Kolsky, former Assistant Superintendent of the Northeast Region, to Deputy Chief of Professional Development;
- Michael Sonkowsky, former Director, Office of Grants Development and Support, to Deputy Chief of Grants Development and Compliance;
- Lissa Johnson, former Regional Superintendent of the Northeast Region, will now serve as Deputy for Talent Development (Instructional Certification and Recruitment);
- Gregory Shannon, former Regional Superintendent of the East Region, will serve as the Deputy for Hearings and Expulsions; and,
- Michael Silverman, former High School Regional, will serve as Deputy for Secondary Instructional Programs.

As Superintendent Ackerman recognizes and responds to the need for efficient and effective structural changes, she is working with recently appointed Deputy Superintendent Leroy Nunery to keep her promise to transform the district while maintaining the same number of senior level positions. "This transformation", she said, "is both essential and urgent if we are to accelerate achievement for all children and accomplish the goals of Imagine 2014."