



NJDOE News

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DOE Announces Eight-month Study Period for Marie H. Katzenbach School for the Deaf *Department is Exploring Options for a Partnership with the College of New Jersey*

Commissioner of Education William L. Librera, joined by representatives of the Marie H. Katzenbach School for the Deaf, the College of New Jersey and the Department of Education (DOE) this week announced that all three entities are exploring the possibility of a partnership that would increase the quality of education at the school.

In a meeting with roughly 100 parents, teachers, union and community members Tuesday night at the school, Commissioner Librera outlined plans for an eight-month study that will focus on whether an agreement between the DOE, Katzenbach and the College of New Jersey would improve the quality of learning for students in the deaf community.

"This is an opportunity to explore ways to be better tomorrow than we are today," Commissioner Librera said. "Right now, this is not a plan of action. This is a plan of study. We all remain committed to increasing the quality of education for the students at Katzenbach. This study is the best way to move forward."

As outlined during the meeting, the DOE is setting up five study groups under the oversight of an executive steering committee, comprised of representatives from the DOE, College of New Jersey and the Katzenbach school. The steering committee will define each sub group's mission and then incorporate their findings into a final report.

The study groups will explore the five following areas:

- o Educational Programs and Services;
- o Facilities;
- o Finances;
- o Governance; and
- o Human Resources.

The study timeline is tentatively as follows:

- o October, 2003: the executive steering committee will meet and formally assign members to study groups, as well as the parameters for the study groups;
- o October, 2003 to May, 2004: the executive steering committee meets on a monthly basis;
- o October, 2003 to April, 2004: the study groups will conduct their review and analysis;
- o February 2004: the study groups will submit an interim report to the executive steering committee; and
- o May, 2004: The executive steering committee will prepare and distribute a final report based on the study group findings.

During Tuesday night's meeting, Commissioner Librera stressed that no final decisions regarding the future of the school have been made. Answering a question from the audience, the Commissioner also said the school would operate as it does currently should an agreement not come to pass.

"We remain dedicated to this process so that we can identify what works and what doesn't work," the Commissioner said. "Should we find the partnership cannot happen, we will continue to support this school as it operates. Dennis Russell is a wonderful superintendent, and we have every bit of confidence in his abilities."

Commissioner Librera, joined by Deputy Commissioner Dwight Pfennig, Assistant Commissioner for Student Services Isaac Bryant and other DOE officials, as well as President R. Barbara Gitenstein of the College of New Jersey. Joining Dr. Gitenstein was Dr. Stephen R. Briggs, the college's Provost and other college officials.

Superintendent Dennis Russell hosted the meeting.

For more information, please contact the Department of Education Public Information Office at (609) 292-1126.