



State of New Jersey
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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CHRIS CHRISTIE
Governor

KIM GUADAGNO
Lt. Governor

KIMBERLEY HARRINGTON
Commissioner

July 27, 2017

Mr. Stephen Brown, Board President
Englewood Board of Education
274 Knickerbocker Road
Englewood, NJ 07631

Dear Mr. Brown:

SUBJECT: Englewood Public School District - Student Records Review
OFAC Case #INV-008-17

The New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Fiscal Accountability and Compliance (OFAC), completed an investigation of the Englewood Public School District. As a result of the review, the OFAC has identified issues of noncompliance with the N.J.S.A. 18A et seq. and N.J.A.C. 6A et seq. The issues of noncompliance are detailed in the attached Report of Examination. Please provide a copy of the report to each board member.

Utilizing the process outlined in the attached "Procedures for LEA/Agency Response, Corrective Action Plan and Appeal Process," the Englewood Public School District is required, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-5.6, to publicly review and discuss the findings in this report at a public board meeting no later than 30 days after receipt of the report. Within 30 days of the public meeting, the board must adopt a resolution certifying that the findings were discussed in a public meeting and approving a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) to address the issues raised in the report and/or submit an appeal of any findings in dispute. A copy of the resolution and the approved CAP and/or appeal must be sent to this office within 10 days of adoption by the board. Direct your response to my attention.

Also, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-5.6(c), you must post the findings of the report and the board's CAP on your school district's website. Should you have any questions, please contact Thomas C. Martin, Manager, Investigations Unit, at (609) 633-9615.

Sincerely,

Robert J. Cicchino, Director
Office of Fiscal Accountability and Compliance

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Attachments

c: Robert Bumpus Norah Peck
David Saenz Robert Kravitz
Thomas C. Martin Stephen Eells

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STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND COMPLIANCE
INVESTIGATIONS UNIT

ENGLEWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT
STUDENT RECORDS REVIEW
OFAC CASE #INV-008-17

REPORT OF EXAMINATION

JULY 2017

**ENGLEWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT
STUDENT RECORDS REVIEW**

INVESTIGATIVE SUMMARY

The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE), Office of Fiscal Accountability and Compliance (OFAC), received notification from the Bergen County Office of Education (County) that it received information from Robert Kravitz, Superintendent, Englewood Public School District (District) alleging improprieties with respect to the recording of information on the District's high school students' transcripts. Mr. Kravitz also alleged the District was not in compliance with the following: students graduated without satisfying the required courses; students graduated without the required credits; the District failed to follow the NJDOE Independent Course of Study guidelines; and employees working without the required certification. The complainant also cited numerous other allegations which are outside of the OFAC's jurisdictional authority to investigate.

On March 13, 2017, OFAC personnel met with Mr. Kravitz concerning the matter he reported to the County. Mr. Kravitz stated that during late 2016 he commissioned Pitt Bull Secure Technologies (Pitt Bull) to review the District's high school transcripts. Pitt Bull issued its findings in a report, dated February 16, 2017, which detailed that Pitt Bull found over two thousand unaccounted for changes to students' transcripts, irregularities with students satisfying graduation requirements and that the District did not meet the NJDOE guidelines on Independent Study.

During March 2017, the investigation was initiated to determine the validity of the allegations. The investigator reviewed all pertinent District documents and interviewed District personnel thought to have information related to the matter. The investigator confirmed the District had over two thousand changes in the operating system utilized for transcripts and grading but found most of the changes were made by the District's guidance secretary and/or the system's analyst. However, it was revealed the changes were authorized by District Guidance Office personnel. The investigator found no evidence of fraudulent changes.

The information obtained during the OFAC review, along with the bases for the OFAC determinations, are detailed below:

Failed to comply with regulatory graduation requirements

N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.1(a)1 vi, vii and x, states in part:

"(a) For a State-endorsed diploma, district boards of education shall develop, adopt, and implement local graduation requirements that prepare students for success in post-secondary degree programs, careers, and civic life in the 21st century, and that include the following:

1. Participation in a local program of study of not fewer than 120 credits in courses designed to meet all of the CCCS, including, but not limited to, the following credits:

vi. At least 3 ¾ credits in health, safety, and physical education during each year of enrollment, distributed as 150 minutes per week, as required by N.J.S.A. 18A:35-5, 7 and 8;

vii. At least five credits in visual and performing arts;

x. At least five credits in 21st century life and careers, or career-technical education."

N.J.S.A. 18A:35-8 states in part:

“Time devoted to course. The time devoted to such courses shall aggregate at least two and one-half hours in each school week . . .”

The investigator reviewed the relevant student records for the 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years which disclosed that students did not receive the required amount of time each week for physical education. The students met three days a week for 47 minutes each day, nine minutes less than the 150 minutes per week requirement. The records also revealed some students did not satisfy the requirement of five credits for Visual and Performing Arts and five credits in 21st Century Life and Careers. Additionally, one student was found to have graduated with an insufficient number of credits.

Conclusion

The District failed to develop, adopt, and implement a curriculum which would meet the regulatory requirements as outlined in N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.1(a)1 vi, vii and x, and N.J.S.A. 18A:35-8.

Failed to comply with the Independent Study Guidelines

N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.1(a)2 i., sets forth a variety of individualized learning opportunities to meet the conditions for a State-endorsed diploma and provides:

“District boards of education shall establish a process to approve individualized student learning opportunities that meet or exceed the CCCS.”

A review of the District’s documents and the Englewood Board of Education’s (Board) meeting minutes disclosed that although the District did have an Independent Study Guide developed by Dr. Noel Gordon, Director of Guidance, the guide was not Board approved.

Conclusion

The District failed to develop, adopt, and implement an Independent Study Guide which would meet the regulatory requirements as provided for in N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.1(a)2.

Failed to comply with Certification responsibilities of the District Board

The investigator was informed by the District that Jamayla Scott was employed as a school counselor without holding a school counselor certificate. A query of the Teachers Certification Information System disclosed Ms. Scott is a holder of a social worker’s certificate.

N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-5.4(a) states in part:

“The chief school administrator of the employing district board of education shall require each newly employed teaching staff member, or each teaching staff member reassigned to a new grade level, subject area, or administrative position, to produce an appropriate certificate before the employee

assumes any responsibility for the performance of assigned duties. The chief school administrator shall ensure the certificate is valid."

Further information revealed Ms. Scott applied for a school counselor certificate but let the process expire prior to obtaining one. Ms. Scott was interviewed and confirmed she holds a social worker certificate and is not certificated as a school counselor. Further investigation disclosed Ms. Scott was hired by the District as a social worker and later was reassigned to the school counselor position by Dr. Gordon. During his interview, Dr. Gordon confirmed he placed Ms. Scott at the Eagle Academy as a school counselor/social worker, citing that both positions were similar.

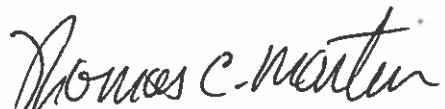
Conclusion

The District Board failed to comply with its certification responsibilities as outlined in N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-5.4(a).

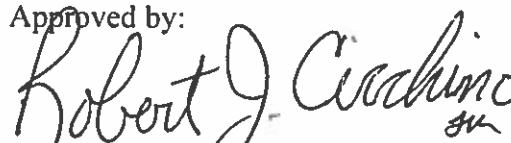
Recommendation

The District must develop and submit a Corrective Action Plan indicating the measures it will implement to ensure compliance with the applicable provisions of N.J.S.A. 18A:35-8 et seq., N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.1(a)1, 2, and N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-5.4(a).

Submitted by:


Thomas C. Martin, Manager
Investigations Unit

Approved by:


Robert J. Cicchino, Director
Office of Fiscal Accountability and Compliance

Investigator:

Francesco Frangella