



**RAS J. BARAKA**  
MAYOR  
NEWARK, NEW JERSEY

November 19, 2014

David C. Hespe  
Acting Commissioner  
New Jersey Department of Education  
100 River View Plaza  
P.O. Box 500  
Trenton, NJ 08625

Dear Commissioner Hespe,

I write to again bring your attention to serious problems at Barringer High School. Originally reported to you from my office in a letter dated September 23, 2014, these problems continue to deny students at Barringer High School access to a thorough and efficient education as guaranteed to them by the New Jersey State Constitution. My office has also forwarded to you recent concerns from the community about the continuation of these problems into the fourth month of school. Students continue to attend classes that exceed class size limitations, are placed in core content areas with uncertified staff, and do not have textbooks. Additionally, there are serious concerns that special needs students are not receiving the services specified in their individualized education plans (IEPs) and Limited English Proficient (LEP) students do not have appropriate placements. Many students at Barringer High School have completely lost an entire marking period of instructional time and learning as a result of these intolerable conditions. There are numerous violations of district, state, and federal regulations and policies.

Barringer High School is designated a Priority school as required by the Elementary and Secondary Education (ESEA) Waiver approved by the United States Department of Education on February 9, 2012. A central condition of the ESEA is that schools designated as "Priority" and "Focus" schools would receive intensive intervention in these schools to improve student performance, through improvement plans and supports, and on-going progress monitoring. Pursuant to the approval of the ESEA Waiver the NJDOE also adopted the "School Turnaround and Improvement" regulations, which codified the intervention requirements for Priority and Focus schools (NJ Admin. Code 6A:33).

As a requirement for state intervention in Priority and Focus schools, the State established the "Regional Assistance Centers" (RACs) "led by experienced educators and specialists who are charged with driving school improvement in schools identified as Priority and Focus schools (NJ Admin. Code 6A: 33-1.1). Each RAC must 1) complete a "Quality School Review" (QSR) based on the USED turnaround principles to evaluate each Priority and Focus school's current performance and determines its needs (NJ Admin. Code 6a: 33.2.3 (a)); 2) develop and implement

a school improvement plan (SIP) "on a timeline and in manner specified " by the RAC leader (NJ Admin. Code 6A: 33-2.4 (a)); 3) provide support for the implementation of the SIP and where necessary take "appropriate action to ensure the SIP's meaningful implementation," including redirecting expenditures, restructuring curriculum, directing staff retraining or reassignment, withholding federal funds from the district, and altering the school and/or district budget (NJ Admin. Code 6A: 33-2.5); and, 4) appoint a "qualified turnaround provider" to assist with the SIP implementation when a school "fails to adequately implement the SIP, make progress, or cooperate with RAC (NJ Admin. Code 6A: 33-3.1).

Given that Barringer High School is identified as a Priority school per the approval of the ESEA Waiver, and given that under the leadership of State Superintendent Cami Anderson none of the above interventions have been provided to Barringer High School as specified in the "School Turnaround and Improvement" regulations, the deplorable conditions at Barringer High School are the responsibility of State. Students at Barringer High School have lost far too much instructional time and have been subjected to learning conditions that in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century no student should endure. Remedying these conditions and putting Barringer High School on course for on-going and sustained improvement is paramount to the outcome of every student that attends Barringer High School.

I request immediate intervention of the RAC at Barringer High School. I also request that the process outlined to intervene and support Priority and Focus schools through the RACs is immediately put in place for Barringer High School, and phased in by 2015 for the remaining 27 schools in the State-Operated Newark Public Schools district that are identified as Priority and Focus schools. My office stands ready to assist you in any way possible to ensure that our schools are receiving the interventions and supports the ESEA Waiver and the "School Turnaround and Improvement" regulations require they receive.

Sincerely,



Ras J. Baraka  
Mayor

Cc: Arne Duncan, United States Secretary of Education  
Donna Aron, Assistant Attorney General  
Catherine Lahmon, Director, Office of Civil Rights  
Deborah S. Delisle, Assistant Sec. of ESEA  
Senator Ronald L. Rice  
Senator Teresa Ruiz  
Assemblywoman Mila Jacey  
Karen Brown, Corporate Counsel, City of Newark  
Lauren Wells, PhD, Chief Education Officer, City of Newark